

Book and film reviews

Anthropological fiction

DRAGADZE, TAMARA. *Josefu's thousand hills*. 352 pp. Helsingør: Whyte Tracks, 2014. £34.99 (paper)

Anthropologist and philosopher Tamara Dragadze's novel *Josefu's thousand hills* begins with the arrival of Ugandan-born Brit Josefu Mutesa in Rwanda as its streets, hillsides, and valleys are still littered with the bodies of Tutsi victims of the genocide. His colleague and he, both working for the United Nations, are on a fact-finding mission to record evidence of what happened between April and July 1994. What Josefu experiences, sees, and hears from survivors, killers, and their supporters, as well as jubilant returning Tutsi refugees, wrecks him mentally.

During his assignment in Rwanda, Josefu becomes disillusioned about the UN and its proclaimed ideals. He discovers an organization that works in total indifference and which, in the first place, seeks comfort for its personnel. As memories of Rwanda trickle back into his mind after years of being shielded from them, Josefu asks, in one of his horror-haunted daydreams: 'Perhaps the UN has a purpose and direction? Like the four-wheel-drive vehicle it favours for working in poor countries, with a satellite phone aerial on its bonnet, strong and erect like a proud penis?' (p. 80).

It is while aboard one of these comfortable jeeps that Josefu and his colleagues encounter two Hutu children left behind by their fleeing parents. The younger brother is dying. He spits blood as he coughs. As Josefu holds the dying boy against his chest, one of his UN colleagues remarks: 'Should you be getting so close? ...

I mean you don't know what it is he's got' (p. 188). The boy dies in his arms and Josefu decides to place the body in the jeep with the aim of burying the boy with full honours. 'We're not having a corpse in our car', another colleague protests, adding that 'it's certainly not our mandate to have a corpse in our car'.

Dragadze's novel is an indictment of the entire humanitarian industry, which it ridicules as being a heartless profit-making business. The Hutu refugee camps in eastern Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo) are presented as 'manna for the charity organizations' (p. 160). Humanitarians are shown literally fighting to get media attention, which will guarantee more donations. When two aid workers belonging to two different charities realize that international TV crews are filming a dying Hutu baby, they rush to him, with their charity logos well displayed to the cameras. The two men fall on the ground over the baby. The cameras 'filmed only the victorious one on his feet again, with the baby in his arms' (p. 160).

Apart from being a mordant exposé of the UN's and other charities' absurd rules and practices, the book also touches upon the politics of memory and the corresponding ethnicity-related clichés about collective guilt and collective innocence. Since Rwanda is a country of conflict-rife pasts and of competing memory narratives, one is constantly wondering which narrative the novel reflects.

In fact, there is a perfect alignment with the official, dominant narrative that was carefully crafted by the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF): precolonial Rwanda was close to perfection; the colonizers invented ethnicity to divide and rule; and so on. Then comes a blank episode between October 1990 and April 1994 that involved only a victimless liberation war. The

RPF rebels emerged in April 1994 as saviours who stopped the genocide. If any Hutu died at all, they were victims of angry Tutsi victims and the culprits were punished. Josefu accepts this simplified version, to the point of wondering why the Hutu ran away from well-disciplined and morally minded Tutsi rebels and left the country. One finds the explanation for this perfect alignment with the official narrative in the acknowledgements, where Dragadze, an Eastern European expert, expresses her gratitude to Rwanda's diplomatic missions in various countries.

Readers should also be warned about a few distractions that are either misleading or disrupting. The book describes President Habyarimana's plane as flying from Arusha – rather than Dar es Salaam – when it was downed. 'Afrika' and 'Musisi' (characters) are repeatedly misspelled as Africa (the continent) and Masisi (a region in Democratic Republic of Congo), respectively.

Despite the above-mentioned imperfections, *Josefu's thousand hills* is a valuable addition to the growing body of works of fiction on Rwanda, and should be read not as an ethnography but as anthropological fiction. However, like other novels on genocide, it calls for vigilant reading as it contains a few ideological assumptions which may be there to remind us that Rwanda's memories are far from reconciled.

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Art and the senses

BIDDLE, JENNIFER LOUREIDE. *Remote avant-garde: Aboriginal art under occupation*. xv, 265 pp., illus., bibliogr. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2016. £19.99 (paper)

Remote avant-garde is a provocative title evoking both the wartime experience of occupation and the most abstract and misunderstood art from the past. There are vestiges of these ideas in the book, but the focus is on particular people and places, as well as on the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), usually called 'The Intervention'. This was a major event for Aboriginal people, who experienced it as an occupation that included 600 soldiers and detachments from the Australian Defence Force (ADF), who were sent to deal with allegations of child abuse and neglect. Jennifer Loureide Biddle successfully puts forward her argument for a different aesthetic that she considers avant-garde

for Aboriginal works from the Central and Western Desert produced under the cloud of the Intervention occupation.

Throughout the book, Biddle consistently refers to many theorists, anthropologists, and art historians in order to ground her ideas, while at times perhaps not letting her own concepts stand on their own merit. These ideas provide a context for her to frame ways of thinking about those outside and inside of the communities. She rightly notes that the book is not a survey of the avant-garde and that it is biased in that she is Warlpiri-centric, drawing on her own experiences and relationships with these desert people.

Biddle presents case studies, some of individual artists, others of groups of artists operating as collectives, including the Tjanpi Desert Weavers. One distinctive characteristic of many of the works is what she terms 'bilitery aesthetics'. The use of language in the artworks is literal, as in the photographs of Rhonda Unurupa Dick, the paintings of June Walkutjukurr Richards, and the paintings from Margaret Boko Nampitjinpa. The histories of bilingual education, the use of Kriol, and the complexity of assumptions about remote Aboriginal people combine to make works like Richards's *Gimme* into one that demonstrates, as Biddle says, 'the poverty of a language not its own' (p. 62). The artists using written words are bringing a different, avant-garde approach to desert artwork that has long been associated with the acrylic non-figurative paintings.

It was refreshing to see so many women artists represented in the avant-garde, particularly those associated with the fibre arts, including the Tangentyere Artists, Tjanpi Desert Weavers, and Yarrenyty Artere Artists. In particular, Biddle has provided a scholarly addition to the knowledge of the artists of the Alice Springs town camps through her chapter on Tangentyere Artists in chapter 2. Besides painting on canvas, it is their use of recycled materials such as bottle tops for earrings and works such as Jane Young's *Little rocks in the Simpson Desert*, which is painted on a hubcap, that points to mind relationships with country. The author points out that it 'is art from and of town camp' (p. 53, original emphasis).

Biddle sheds a different light on the usual dichotomy of remote/urban artists that has permeated art writing. The remote artists are often seen as the 'authentic' ones, being traditional, and the urban artists are seen to be more avant-garde in their work. This usually means that the urban artists are not as valued because they are not seen as authentic. Biddle expands how some of the 'traditional' artists'

works could be described by the term 'museum artifacts' (Margo Neale's term, quoted on p. 3) because their artwork is traditional. In *Remote avant-garde* the view of the remote desert people takes a different twist. The artists' works that she discusses may not look like the classic desert Aboriginal art, but they may be by the same artists who also produce accepted traditional art. The avant-garde work in Biddle's book leans towards performance and mixed media. There are other parallels in Australia in terms of the avant-garde with perhaps works from Buku Larrnggay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala. Artists are working with glass, corrugated iron, digital media, and found materials, but, as Nicolas Rothwell states, 'maintain a strict fidelity to their ancestral symbols and designs' ('Found objects in the creative landscape', *The Australian*, 19 July 2013).

Is it this adherence to ancestral designs that authenticates the work, or is it what Biddle points to as the performance or making of the work? 'The marks made on canvas today repeat original Ancestral imprintation of country – not because they look like, copy, or transfer Ancestral marks but because they literally, materially, repeat originary Ancestral mark making through human practice' (p. 98). Perhaps in this search for the new and avant-garde in remote Aboriginal art it remains important to recognize and value the classic works that demonstrate a continuity in ways of representing the Ancestral world.

LOUISE HAMBY *Australian National University*

KAY, JON. *Folk art and aging: life-story objects and their makers*. xii, 131 pp., illus., bibliogr. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2016. £22.99 (paper)

In this warm-hearted book, Jon Kay studies folk art created by the elderly in Indiana, USA, through looking especially at the connections between material objects, life reviews, and narratives of personal experience. Kay considers old age a creative life phase, and this is an important subtext to his encounters with Bob, Gustav, Marian, John, and Milan. In *Folk art and aging*, these elders are portrayed as active agents who make their choices about the forms, methods, materials, and topics they want to work with, as well as where, when, and with whom they feel comfortable practising their craft. The main questions Kay asks are about the difficulties the elders face as they age; however, he also discusses the value that folk art can have, such as how it encourages the elders to remain independent.

The book's five life stories show how the elderly make a different kind of folk art, but, more importantly, every account adds something new to our understanding on ageing. This is because Kay analyses each separately to offer slightly different perspectives. In Bob's woodcarving (chap. 1), collaborative memory is essential since he wants the scenes he carves to be recognizable to the others who were present in the depicted situation. Therefore he studies historical events both individually and with other people. Through this process, Bob recollects his own past, but also makes new memories with others, and stays tightly connected to his family and community.

Making sense of themselves, their pasts, and what they have become is pivotal in the art-making of Gustav (chap. 2) and Marian (chap. 3). Gustav paints his memories, mainly focusing on his experience of surviving a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War. In her rugs, Marian constructs scenes from the happiest time of her life: when her children were young. Though she had a hard time while growing up and later in a violent marriage, she concentrates on her happy recollections because she spends months hooking one rug. The 'truth' of the events is not that important, and by editing her memories, Marian makes her current life more enjoyable.

Carving text from his personal life or on social issues onto colourful walking sticks has two main meanings for John (chap. 4): to feel less lonely and to encourage sociability. John uses the sticks while out and about, and often their appearance encourages people to start a conversation. This interaction makes John visible in a society where the elderly often go unnoticed in public. The materials and colours of the sticks connect him with his childhood, while through the text they display, he feels connected to his late wife and to the society in which he lives.

Milan (chap. 5) makes and plays the prima, a type of balalaika. In his workshop there are displays of pictures, newspaper clippings, and old instruments that tell stories. These displays remind and encourage him to recount, for example, his search for a turtle's shell to make his first prima. In this chapter, Kay provides an interesting narrative analysis of the turtle story, and simultaneously shows anthropology's strength. By spending time with Milan and becoming his friend, Kay can discuss, for example, the importance of sustaining his ethnic identity through his art, or what it means to have an audience for an elderly folk artist.

American folk art is new to me, a Finnish reader, since our folk traditions are different. This

is one of the reasons I enjoyed reading Kay's book: I learned about something of which I had no prior knowledge, and thus widened my understanding of both ageing and American culture. This is why anthropology matters. On the other hand, I would have appreciated a short introduction to the phenomenon of folk art in the United States, its history, and current status. The same goes for the cultural and social contexts of the ethnographies, especially with reference to ageing, class, ethnicity, and gender. Analysing these in relation to the making and the meanings of folk art would have added to the knowledge on ageing, whereas using ritual theory, as Kay does, seems to offer little that is new to this discussion.

In brief, Kay shows how self-made folk art objects are 'time-travelling devices' (p. 30) which take the elderly back to their childhood, link past and present family members, and make them think about their future audiences and thus their legacies. These objects are foremost transformative: they strengthen elders' sense of independence and belonging to their communities and society. Highly recommended.

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STEINGO, GAVIN. *Kwaito's promise: music and the aesthetics of freedom in South Africa*. xx, 307 pp., maps, illus., bibliogr. Chicago: Univ. Press, 2016. £22.50 (paper)

Gavin Steingo's *Kwaito's promise* is an intricate inquiry into the complexities of *kwaito*, the popular electronic, loop- and synth-heavy music 'commonly understood as the expression of freedom' (p. 2) in post-apartheid South Africa. Combining granular ethnographic research in Johannesburg's Soweto with a panoramic analysis of the political, economic, and psychic realities of race and citizenship in contemporary South Africa, the book is a deep meditation on freedom, aesthetics, and the sensory. It is also an incisive critique of musicology's insistent politicization of music. Continual quests to 'unmask' the power relations in which music is rooted, Steingo argues, are based on an elitist notion that scholars 'know the correct way to perceive sounds' (p. 6).

Kwaito's promise pushes against theoretical approaches which reduce music to politics and neglect the aesthetic, sensory realities it generates for those involved. Instead, Steingo argues, *kwaito's* active suspension of political and moralizing content establishes 'a domain of sensory reality at odds with the accepted ordering of society' (p. 7). Therein lies its potency, its 'promise'. Sensory perception is understood

throughout as a distinct experiential realm in which sociopolitical realities and possibilities converge. The monograph opens with a nuanced discussion of freedom, contrasting the formal equality of South African citizens with the radical stasis and extreme inequality of the post-apartheid state, the rigged democratic transition, and the violent everyday circumscription of black citizenship. In other words, 'people struggle precisely because they are free' (p. 2), and *kwaito* is entwined within this paradox.

Amidst such fine-grained ethnographic prose, the blanket reference to 'African musicians' and how 'they often' speak about 'their music' in chapter 1 feels vague and jarring. Indeed the 'tired cliché that Western music is separate from life while African music is part of life' (p. 17) is not just tired, but widely discredited and therefore something of a straw man here. Nonetheless, what follows is an expansive, highly sensitive consideration of *kwaito* from multiple angles. Steingo zooms in on aesthetic details, using a combination of transcriptive and descriptive methods to great effect, in order to understand *kwaito* in its local, international, commercial, and non-professional contexts.

Of particular value are discussions of immobility, obduracy, and technology offered in chapters 4 and 5, connected to Soweto's marginalization both economically and spatially. Drawing on his experiences with *kwaito* producer Siswe, Steingo highlights the oft-neglected musical productivity of this stasis, the creativity that springs from spatial and temporal 'stuckness'. A radical openness ensues, a focus on constant layering and cross-pollination rather than a finished musical work. *Kwaito* is shown here to cultivate a deep relationship with futurity.

The musical dimensions of technological failure are also carefully considered. While discussions of technology overwhelmingly emphasize the increased ease of sharing, storing, and producing music, Steingo's experiences of 'musicking' in Soweto are marked instead by frequent technological failure and the precarity of archives, which have distinct aesthetic implications. Detailed ethnography effectively nuances the terms of debate here, creating space for failures, glitches, and accidents to be heard, thus interrogating the technophilic overtones of much contemporary music scholarship.

Similarly, and contravening ethnomusicological accounts of the fetishism and impenetrability of the studio (G. Born, *Rationalizing culture*, 1995; L. Meintjes, *Recording studio as fetish*, 2012), Steingo's interlocutors

demonstrate an insistence on cracking open and peering inside recording technology. As such, they display a rejection of passive consumerism, and an ingenuity which he deems integral to *kwaito* musicking as a whole: that is, an ongoing transgression of boundaries, sonic, aesthetic, spatial, and temporal, a refusal to be categorized, and an irreverence for the powers that define and administrate forms of life.

In documenting *kwaito* musicians' practices, frequent references are made to religious cosmologies involving spirit possession, ancestral worship, and animal sacrifice. While Steingo highlights the discrimination surrounding these practices in South Africa, he steers clear of engaging with the numinous in any depth, which could have provided useful insight into how his featured musicians theorize their own practice, success, or failure. Nonetheless, in chapter 5 he deploys Ochoa Gautier's concept of 'acoustic assemblages' to great effect, giving equal ontological weight to the various components of *kwaito*, be they 'humans, animals or mythical beings' (p. 158).

Throughout the book, Steingo takes at face value *kwaito*'s sounds and voices. He does not attempt to reinterpret the musical and intellectual labour involved, but instead deftly contextualizes it, combining grounded, richly textured ethnography with analytic forms which strive for radical openness. His inquiry mirrors *kwaito*'s refusal of musical closure; rather than draw conclusions, illuminate, or uncover, he consistently positions himself to listen in, to complexify and blur boundaries. The result is a nuanced and musical piece of scholarship.

LIZZIE OGLE *King's College London*

Biography and history

CAPLAN, PAT. *Mikidadi: individual biography and national history in Tanzania*. 191 pp., map, fig., illus., bibliogr. Canon Pyon, Herefordshire: Sean Kingston, 2016. £50.00 (cloth)

The life of Mikidadi, the principal character at the heart of anthropologist Pat Caplan's intriguing hybrid of biography and national history, was not extraordinary. He was, in his own view, a failure. Coming of age in the heyday of Tanzania's Ujamaa socialism, Mikidadi was born into a family of modest means and grew up on the hinterlands of national development. Although he went to school, he was unable to obtain the level of academic study that he sought. He quit his

salaried job to care for his sick father and was never formally employed again; he stood for election but lost. Mikidadi also failed to achieve the financial security for the large family he supported, and played only a limited role as a change agent in the fishing/farming community on Mafia Island where he lived most of his life. In terms of the large historical stage of Tanzanian history, he was a nobody.

However, Caplan persuades us that by virtue of his ordinariness, Mikidadi's life is worthy of our attention for what it can reveal about how changes in the world capitalist system over the past fifty years have conspired to shape Tanzanian economic, political, and social policies that have had a significant impact on individuals' lives. Taking this longer telescopic view, she argues, enables us to fairly evaluate the rewriting of postcolonial Tanzanian history by neoliberal social scientists, in which Ujamaa socialism is portrayed as an utter failure, in contrast to World Bank/IMF 'cures' that have led to a miracle of recovery.

The biographical history is organized chronologically by decade, and each chapter's beginning provides a useful timeline of Tanzanian history's major highlights, along with separate timelines for developments in the lives of Mikidadi and the author. So, for example, the 1960s begins with Tanganyika and Zanzibar's Independence. In Mikidadi's personal history, this decade is marked by his early primary school education as well as the author's education and early doctoral research on Mafia Island. The 1970s take us through Mikidadi's struggles to obtain secondary school education, technical training, and his first government salaried job. Ujamaa socialist policies were established against the backdrop of rising world oil prices and the collapse of the world price for primary export crops that were the mainstay of so many sub-Saharan African economies. Two wars take a toll on the economy and bring the influence of a global politicized Islam to Swahili communities along the coast and islands. Mikidadi marries and begins a family in the 1980s during the period of the most drastic structural adjustment policies mandated by the IMF. The 1990s chapter (when Mikidadi runs for elected office and begins a couple of NGOs) shows readers how the introduction of the multi-party system and rising tensions between Muslims and Christians begin to have an impact on the local leadership of the Mafia. Mikidadi's death in 2002 occurs in the context of both neoliberal economic progress and widespread government corruption.

Caplan brings the biographical and historical narratives to life in the best of ethnographic

tradition by offering the reader vignettes from her field notes and reactions from her more personal journals, while providing wider cultural context for the events that occur in the family, school, mosque, and government office. Throughout she provides numerous examples of both the stumbling blocks that impeded Mikidadi's progress towards his goals, and the resilience and creativity that he employed in these pursuits. Ultimately this is a narrative about the limits of both individual agency and cross-cultural friendship, and the crucial role that key informants/assistants play in the lives and research of anthropologists. Caplan discusses the blurry ethics of unequal power, the debts that cannot be repaid, the ownership of intellectual property, the guilt, the love, and the longing for what she calls 'transcendence' of differences of background and culture. Of course, no one is really a nobody; especially for the community to which they are connected. The anthropologist who narrated this biography is very much a part of this equation. One wishes that Caplan would have overcome her hesitation about putting *this* narrative at the centre of the monograph, since Mikidadi's biography so eloquently illustrates that while he may have failed at meeting many of the public goals he set for himself, he completely succeeded in fulfilling the ideals of kinship and community's moral universe; ideals that many ordinary Tanzanians sadly can no longer afford.

DONNA O. KERNER *Wheaton College*

MILES, WILLIAM F.S. *Scars of partition: postcolonial legacies in French and British borderlands*. xix, 365 pp., maps, illus., bibliogr. Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2014. £27.99 (paper)

William Miles's *Scars of partition* is an enormously ambitious work on an apparently obscure topic. Miles, an American political scientist, aims to compare and contrast the long-term consequences of British and French colonialism – the ambitious part – by looking at border populations in places 'partitioned' (defined very broadly) between these colonial powers – the apparently obscure aspect. He argues in his framing hypothesis that it is in these border areas that 'one most clearly captures the long-term legacies of colonialism' (p. 14). Many anthropologists and historians who work on postcolonial border regions will agree, but he goes on to hypothesize, more controversially, that borderlands 'crystallize the differences between the former colonies' of Britain and France (p. 15), and that in such places one 'can also keep

variables more constant' (pp. 15-16) than is possible in national heartlands and urban centres. The 'scientific' language here illustrates Miles's distinctly positivist theoretical agenda.

He divides comparative studies of British and French colonialisms into the similarity school and the difference school. Most scholars today, he suggests (citing Achille Mbembe as an example), are in the former camp: they see the French and the British varieties of colonialism, in sub-Saharan Africa or South and Southeast Asia, as broadly similar exercises of brute power and assumed racial superiority, and, in any case, as largely irrelevant and comparatively brief episodes in the broader course of African and Asian history. He places himself on the other side of the divide, characterizing British and French colonialisms as having fundamentally different ideologies and methods of rule, leading to significantly contrasting consequences down to the present. This seems rather a 'straw man' distinction: surely the two are similar in some ways, different in others (and at different times and places), and it is hard to think of anyone working on such issues who would suggest otherwise.

This is not to say that Miles's book is uninteresting. The bulk of it consists of five extended case studies: West Africa, focusing on the Nigeria/Niger border (which he terms a 'classic colonial partition'); the West Indies, emphasizing a comparison between Barbados and Martinique (where the division is described as 'partition by island' and 'multiple partition'); the South Pacific (where there was, to my surprise, an Anglo-French condominium over the New Hebrides); South Asia, specifically Mauritius, which was successively French (until 1815) then British; and finally Southeast Asia (the 150-mile border between Laos and Burma/Myanmar). In these empirical, historical chapters, the breadth of Miles's scope works to the book's advantage. He lays out very clearly the history of each partition case study, and identifies aspects which differentiate the two colonialisms in each specific example. From an anthropologist's point of view, it may be noted that, for all but one of his case studies, Miles undertook local language training and then spent at least seven months in the field, spending considerably more time – several years – in the cases of the Hausa-speaking area of Nigeria/Niger, and the South Pacific island of Vanuatu, the subjects of two previous books.

Miles's general conclusions are not as interesting as his historical chapters, mainly because they are unexceptional. The case studies he has chosen are so different from each other that it is difficult to draw any significant

conclusions from bringing them together. There is also, as he concedes, nothing to suggest that they are in any way typical of other such situations. He argues that while former French territories have tended to hold on to a notion of *francophonie* and a model, however loosely followed, of French structures of governance and education, former British colonies have moved further away from their imperial roots. He carefully suggests that '[t]he range in postcolonial outcomes among former French, British and mixed colonial polities belies simple generalization. Colonial legacy is not a single determinative factor in political outcomes. Still, it is no coincidence that a persistent centralization of political authority remains most pronounced in the former French colonial sphere' (p. 304). The 'strongest generalization' (p. 305), he suggests, is in the linguistic realm, where former French colonies have been much more likely to cling onto the colonial tongue than British ones. Such conclusions do not suggest any advantage in using Miles's natural-science-inspired intellectual framework, rather than a more conventional historical or anthropological approach. However, one gets the sense of a vast amount of knowledge being carefully distilled. It is difficult to think of anyone who would not learn something new and interesting, particularly from the historical chapters.

MARK LEOPOLD *University of Sussex*

MUFWENE, SALIKOKO S. (ed.). *Iberian imperialism and language evolution in Latin America*. 343 pp., maps, tables, bibliogr. Chicago: Univ. Press, 2014. £32.50 (paper)

The outcome of a workshop held at the University of Chicago in 2007, *Iberian imperialism and language evolution in Latin America* unites eleven essays on the history of Latin American Spanish and Portuguese. Most of the contributors are recognized specialists in the related field of creolistics, in which the editor Salikoko Mufwene and authors have long been active participants, and they have opened the field of Spanish and Portuguese linguistics to wider historical perspectives, highlighting the importance of language contacts with African and Amerindian languages. Several chapters in the book take a decidedly ecological approach to language history. The last contribution in the volume, by Michel DeGraff, offers a thought-provoking postscript to the preceding studies that contextualizes them with an outside view from the non-Hispanic Caribbean. By relating Latin

America's colonial language history to that of Haiti, where colonial history ended more abruptly than anywhere else in the Americas, DeGraff reminds readers that the sociohistorical dynamics that shaped Latin American language history set the stage for the vastly different ways in which indigenous languages nowadays interact with Spanish, in contrast to the insular Caribbean region, where Amerindian languages have lost their vitality.

As Mufwene rightly points out in his introductory essay, Latin America is a linguistic curiosity in a number of ways. For one, the Spanish and Portuguese empires created language ecologies in the Americas that differed substantially from each other and, as a result, developed in unique fashions: the Portuguese held multiple colonies in West and Central-West Africa as well as in the Americas, while the Spanish had no such colonies in Africa (at least not until they acquired Equatorial Guinea from the Kingdom of Portugal in 1778). As a result, prior to the nineteenth century, Spanish America did not see the emergence of plantation settlement colonies similar to those that had arisen, for instance, in northeastern Brazil. The effects of this and other ecological differences are debated in considerable detail in the subsequent chapters.

In chapter 2, John M. Lipski raises the germane question of why Spanish has diversified so much, to the point where all Spanish varieties of Latin America are readily distinguishable from their Iberian counterparts. He focuses on the effects of contact with other European languages, African vernaculars, and Native American tongues, and expertly links this mosaic of different language inputs to the question of the relative chronology of Spanish colonialists' arrival, a topic that he has explored in depth for over two decades (see his *Latin American Spanish*, 1994). The question of Amerindian contributions to Spanish is taken up in greater detail in chapters 3 and 4 by Hildo Honório do Couto, who examines Amerindian language islands in Brazil, and Denny Moore, respectively. The latter investigates the historical development of Nheengatu, the *Lingua Geral* that developed and then spread wide and far in the Amazonian basin during colonial times. The importance of the Amerindian input is further pursued by Barbara Pfeiler and Alan Durston in chapters 8 and 9, where the geolinguistic focus is on Mayan Mexico and the Quechua-speaking Highlands of the Andes, respectively. Pfeiler excels at showing how Mayan and Spanish in southern Mexico (Yucatán) are an example of continuity, while Durston expertly helps readers understand how Quechua played an important role as an

(expanding) lingua franca during Spanish colonialization – one that appears to have developed out of a cluster of indigenous languages.

The African contribution to Latin America's language history is appraised most deeply by Heliana Mello in chapter 6. An interesting aspect that author examines closely is the often overlooked, but important, social and linguistic role that interpreters played in the development of colonial language varieties, pidgins and creoles included.

Chapter 7 by J. Clancy Clements and chapter 10 by Christopher Ball show in vivid fashion how languages adapt to new circumstances, social practices, and ever-changing larger political and cultural forces. What emerges from these two and the other studies in this collective volume is that language is a natural phenomenon whose greatest sign of vigour and vitality is found in its constant (though at times seemingly imperceptible) adaptive change.

In assembling this volume, the editor has done an excellent job of uniting specialists to chart Latin America's complex colonial language history and many historical contact points between Iberian colonialism and indigenous cultures. It is a fascinating read and well suited for adaptation in a graduate course that seeks to illustrate Latin America's immense linguistic, social, and ecological diversity.

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SORGE, ANTONIO. *Legacies of violence: history, society, and the state in Sardinia*. xvi, 194 pp., illus., bibliogr. Toronto: Univ. Press, 2015. £16.99 (paper)

Young Sardinian highland pastoralists have garnered much attention, no less among visiting anthropologists and cinematographers than among escapees. Readers may recall *Padre padrone*, the searing film directed by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, based on Gavino Ledda's autobiographical account (1975), tracing his revolt against a sadistic shepherd father and his ascent from illiterate adolescent bestiality to a university professorship in linguistics. Slightly less personal studies crossing the boundaries between academia and popular cinema may be found in Michelangelo Pira's oeuvre (1978 and onward), both at scholarly libraries and on YouTube.

Pira's works bring us directly to the Sardinian village of Orgosolo, a locale previously immortalized in Vittorio de Seta's *Banditi a Orgosolo* (1961). The village's fame/notoriety

sparked again with the 1969 appearance of protest murals, undertaken on its crumbling walls by Dionisio, an anarchist film company from Milan, and continued through the next decade by local schoolteacher Francesco Del Casino and his students. Professional artists followed, as did a world-wide series of human political tragedies – ranging from Tiananmen Square to the destruction of the Twin Towers – deemed worthy of further mural treatment in tiny Orgosolo.

The village is now a cultural heritage site, awash with mural-related tourist money coming in a flow that far exceeds proceeds from sheep-herding. Signs of its former reputation remain, however, as in the bullet-ridden district map at the edge of town and the unsolved murders of local poet Peppino Marotto and a few days later of the brothers Egidio and Salvatore Mattana (on 29 December 2007 and 4 January 2008, respectively). One local theory about Marotto's killing is that he was punished for his habit of reprimanding local shepherd hooligans about their street behaviour, a matter that brings us directly to the book under review.

Antonio Sorge's *Legacies of violence* is thoroughly steeped in the virtues of a well-grounded classical anthropological study: identify the locale, its history, and its inhabitants; embed your study within the relevant theoretical framework; gain the confidence of the natives sufficiently to overcome their distrust of strangers; figure out what makes them tick; and report back your findings in a coherent and readable manner. In short order, the locale is a highland village about 20 kilometres inland from Nuoro, with a history of resistance to outside authority going back to ancient Rome. The major theoretical axes are: first, the traditional Robert Redfield dichotomy between little and great traditions, along with a worthy series of Mediterranean insights too numerous to mention here but well documented and considered in Sorge's book; and, second, James C. Scott's *The art of not being governed*, his 2009 account of government resistance in upland Southeast Asia.

As to the natives, Orgosolesi today appear to be divided between a growing number of educated, bureaucratic cosmopolitans and a dwindling residue of angry, violent, dangerous young men trapped in sheep-herding work. Sorge spent some time interacting with the former, but his most daring encounters were with the latter, known by the term *balenti*, collectively the key component of a wider phenotype Scott termed 'barbarians'.

To gain the *balenti*'s confidence, over a period of some fourteen months, Sorge joined the lads

for many an afternoon of steady and heavy drinking at one or another of several central village bars, followed routinely by long evenings doing the same, and on rare occasions ending with an early morning knock on his door to go out to the hills to meet a hero/criminal for animal slaughter or to enjoy a plate of rustled grilled lamb. The lads now drive beaten up cars and small trucks, freeing them from the lengthy stays in distant hills that condemned their ancestors to savage, isolated ways, and allowing them to engage in twice-daily drinking bouts. They still smell of sheep, however, and their raucous behaviour spills into the main plaza, terrorizing more civilized villagers who must forgo the traditional Italian evening *passaggiata*, or else drive to Nuoro for moments of peaceful relaxation. No decent girl wants to marry one of these ne'er-do-wells, nor does their collective violent and self-destructive conduct carry the clout it may have had centuries ago in offering effective resistance to outside political domination.

My pessimistic appraisal of *balentia* largely accords with that of Sorge's local bourgeois informants, but less so with his seductively romanticized narrative conveying in rich and compelling, if not entirely persuasive, terms a narrow future path whereby the presence of these ruffians may somehow serve to nourish a sense of contemporary village community 'rooted in the recollection of the past and in an awareness of their own transience as individuals' (p. 161). Enthusiastically recommended for students of Mediterranean cultures and pastoral societies throughout the globe.

RUDOLPH BELL *Rutgers University*

VERDERY, KATHERINE. *My life as a spy: investigations in a secret police file*. xvi, 323 pp., map, illus., bibliogr. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2018. £20.99 (paper)

Ceașescu's Romania was a land of myths and rumours, one of which concerned 'the boys with blue eyes'. These were *secus*, or secret policemen, who patrolled in special units on the main street running through the heart of Bucharest, dressed from head to toe identically to one another. Urban myths like this were part and parcel of the distinctively effective system of domination through which the Romanian Communist Party ruled, and, at its broadest level, Katherine Verdery's new book aims at reaching a fresh understanding of the nature of the power

exercised in a personalized communist dictatorship.

My life as a spy is Verdery's masterpiece. In a book full of personal reflection and intense self-questioning, she notes that one of her traits as a scholar has been a tendency to go for the big picture, the macro-model, or, as one of her colleagues put it, to provide ethnography from an aeroplane. Previous readers of her work know the huge strengths of this approach; it has made her renown beyond the discipline of anthropology. However, what was not clear to readers – until now – is that Verdery was also, all along, a remarkable ethnographer of everyday life.

The book takes as its starting point Verdery's discovery, in 2007, of her file in the secret police archives: 2,781 pages, or eleven volumes of reports, commentaries, and conspiratorial photographs in total. It begins with an account of the three major periods of Verdery's fieldwork in Romania between 1973 and 1988, interwoven with both a range of material from the files and new interviews with her informants and friends from that time. Apart from documenting the all-encompassing surveillance, these chapters also contain fascinating discussions of ethnographic issues that arose during her research: from villages' class structure to the outrage caused by her use of ethnic jokes in her first book's epigraph. She also, repeatedly, returns to the volume's core theme: the nature of ethnography and its relationship to other forms of 'research and surveillance', spycraft included.

The second, shorter part of the work opens an intense, recursive, investigation of the nature of the Securitate as an institution – the mechanisms through which surveillance was established and maintained as well as the ways the belief in an omnipresent surveillance destroyed the basis of trust across the whole society. Verdery cites Czesław Miłosz's *Native realm* (1981 edition, p. 281) in her frontispiece: 'Terror is not . . . monumental; it is abject, it has a furtive glance, it destroys the fabric of human society and changes the relationships of millions of individuals into channels for blackmail'. She brings this observation to brilliant and chilling life.

This is what makes the book such a gripping read, for what the file reveals is that it was the life and the relationships of the ethnographer that were made abject. Verdery describes how, like so many other members of our discipline, her life was transformed by the experience of entering an alien culture. Yet the very openness and generosity she finds in herself becomes the means by which the Securitate works its way into her networks and, crucially, into the villages which it

had found so hard to penetrate before the useful American turned up and rendered all her own informants into the secret police's hands.

Lon Fuller wrote of 'The problem of the grudge informer' (*The morality of law*, 1969), posing genuine issues of ethics and moral action. What is so fascinating about Verdery's ethnography of informers – and this is perhaps the first of its kind to delve so deep and wide through the cast of characters that inhabit a secret police file – is that almost none of her friends and acquaintances acted out of resentment. Blackmail and fear were a far more common source of the secret police's hold on their informants. Thus the ethical issue becomes how the ethnographer deals with the divergence in the informer's own remorse and that of the secret policemen whom she occasionally manages to track down. 'What harm did I do you after all?' the slippery ones demand to know, telling her nothing.

Despite this, Katherine Verdery has used her file, and the wonderful auto-ethnography that this has now prompted, to turn over forty years of life experience in Romania to a wonderful end. This is a book that should be read by all anthropologists and taught across the globe – a beautifully written, deeply engaged and engaging text that shows just what a wonderful and revelatory discipline anthropology can be when in the hands of committed and resourceful scholars.

MICHAEL STEWART *UCL*

YU, TAISHAN; edited by VICTOR SPINEI. *China and the Mediterranean world in ancient times*. 396 pp., illus, bibliogr. Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române; Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei, 2014.

China and the Mediterranean world in ancient times owes its existence to the initiative of Victor Spinei, renowned professor of history and archaeology, and Vice-President of the Romanian Academy of Sciences. Aware that even in research fields concerning China the work of Chinese scholars is little known by the international scientific community, he has launched the project of translating into English a collection of articles by Taishan Yu, member of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and one of the leading specialists on the history of the relations between China and the Mediterranean world, in order to make his work accessible to a wider readership. Spinei's initiative is laudable and the resulting volume deserves the attention of all those interested in the subject.

The volume comprises two groups of papers. 'The first group . . . collects, compiles, and comments on the data regarding the relations between the ancient Mediterranean world and the dynasties of the Central Plain of China, while the second group discusses the relations between the Mediterranean world and the nomad tribes of Northern China' (p. 14). All the papers document Yu's impressive familiarity with the Chinese sources. They also show his specific scholarly approach.

The second paper of part one, 'Records relevant to the Roman Empire in ancient Chinese historical works' – by far the longest of the collection and of particular interest to Western scholars – is a good example. In ten sections, A to J (the sequence of which is neither explained nor wholly self-evident), Yu presents all passages referring to 'the Roman Empire (Da Qin)', together with those on 'the Syrian kingdom of the Seleucidae (Tiaozhi) and the Egyptian kingdom under the Ptolemies (Lixuan)' (p. 51 n. 1), in Chinese historical works from the Western Han era (207 BCE-9 CE) to the Tang period (618-917 CE). He cites and comments on each passage, raising all kinds of questions, from problems of script and language to the identification of peoples and polities. The result is a – likely complete – collection of the literary source material with an abundance of informative detail useful for historians, anthropologists of history, and philologists in the main. What Yu does not, however, (intend to) offer is a structured survey of the sequence of steps by which Chinese knowledge of the Western regions developed over the course of the centuries.

The tendency towards detail and a certain reservation vis-à-vis more general statements is also noticeable in other papers. Thus, even where Yu presents things in a relatively continuous narrative, as in the papers on the Xiongnu and Xianbei (pp. 185-232), and on the Rouran nomads (pp. 265-96) in part two, he is following the historical sources, excerpts of which are again displayed in one-to-one translation so closely that the result is a cumulative sequence of descriptions of particular events behind which the general lines of development are sometimes difficult to discern.

However, studies of a more argumentative character are not missing. Thus, in the first paper of part one Yu discusses the problem of the identification of the Tiaozhi, Lixuan, and Da Qin polities (pp. 17-49), and in the second and fourth papers of part two he deals with the theses of the identity of the Xiongnu and Huns (pp. 233-64), and of the Rouran and Avars peoples (pp. 297-325). Though the literary sources are again

extensively quoted and commented on in these cases, this happens within the discussion of clearly defined questions and in order to argue for clear-cut answers.

A few shorter papers deal competently with special issues like literary references to silk production in the Roman Empire (pp. 159-64) or a letter of the Türk Khan to the emperor of Byzantium concerning events in Central Asia (pp. 327-34), which have significance for our knowledge of the trade relationships between China and the Roman Empire and the problem of Rouran-Avar identity, respectively.

Despite the fact that the English is sometimes uncertain and printing errors are relatively frequent, the attempt to introduce Chinese scholarship to an international audience has its merits: it presents the studies of a leading Chinese specialist on two important topics and thus makes the results of his work available for discussion. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, it conveys a first-hand impression of what Chinese scholars are interested in and of how they tend to pursue these interests. That in these respects they differ from their Western counterparts should not come as a surprise and should not lead to a neglect of what can be learned from them.

FRITZ-HEINER MUTSCHLER *Technical University
Dresden/Peking University*

Legal anthropology

BOWEN, JOHN R. *On British Islam: religion, law, and everyday practice in shari'a councils*. 275 pp., bibliogr. Princeton: Univ. Press, 2016. £27.00 (cloth)

Recently shari'a law in the United Kingdom has come under the political and public spotlight, causing alarm about a parallel legal system that is seen to violate women's rights whilst fuelling segregation. It is within this highly politicized climate that John Bowen intervenes with his *On British Islam*. Bowen's ethnography of shari'a councils in England is an ambitious exploration of Islamic institutions' particularities in Britain, and of the ways in which a dynamic, global Islamic jurisprudence is drawn on and adapted to engage with practical questions that arise in Britain.

The book is divided into four sections. Part 1, 'Pathways', provides the ethnographic and historical contexts, and accounts for how these Islamic institutions have emerged. The majority of Muslims in the United Kingdom have settled in distinct neighbourhoods within British cities thanks to chain migration patterns, and have

established a British social life organized around religious and ethnic communities. This has provided opportunities for the development of religious institutions – including shari'a councils – many of which inherited the legacies, specificities, and cleavages of North Indian Islam.

Part 2, 'Practices', takes us to the heart of the debates and deliberations within the Islamic Shari'a Council (ISC) in Leyton, East London. This meticulously researched and creatively analysed section builds on Bowen's comparative work on the anthropology of 'public reasoning' in order to explore the processes, practices, and debates that shape institutions. The ISC has no legal jurisdiction, but was set up in 1982 to provide answers to questions on Islam and, most importantly, to issue Islamic divorces. The ISC bases its legitimacy on its proceduralist approach to divorce – drawing inspiration from English civil procedures – but in practice its Islamic scholars, who act as judges, often end up in drawn-out debates and disagreements; each scholar drawing on his own traditions, legal school, mode of interpretation and justification, and knowledge of courts in other countries. To complicate matters further, the council is often forced to rely on women's testimonies, as men rarely answer the council's letters or attend interviews. Moreover, the ISC does not involve itself in fact-finding or in establishing the authenticity of evidence.

Given this complexity, one of the book's pivotal themes is the councils' legitimacy and performativity. Bowen presents us with three approaches to performativity: judicial performativity, whereby the council has the authority to dissolve a marriage; the husband's performativity, whereby the council mediates an agreement between the husband and wife; and the couple's performativity, whereby the council attests to the dissolution of the marriage contract. He argues that all these are present in the work of the ISC and that the performativity of the shari'a councils is '*intrinsically unstable*' (emphasis in original, p. 90). While this is partly due to the nature of Islamic jurisprudence, this instability is further exacerbated by the 'condition of constructing a quasi-judicial institution without a legal base' and within an anti-Islamic climate (p. 99).

The ISC is one of the larger councils operating in England, and each council is unique in its institutional and scholarly make-up. In part 3, 'Variants', Bowen features two institutions which also grant divorces: the women-led Birmingham Shari'a Council and the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (MAT), part of the Sufi Hijaz community.

These two contrasting examples highlight shari'a councils' diversity. Bowen's comparative approach provides a unique insight into the specific configurations of a fragmented and divisive British Islam. However, by privileging an institutional perspective, we learn more about the reasoning of predominantly male scholars and jurists than about the experiences of those undergoing divorces, making it difficult to assess whether shari'a divorces are accepted and considered valid by the larger community, and whether they are viewed as fair in terms of gender equity or equality.

The fourth and final section, 'Boundaries', moves beyond the councils to explore the interface between Islam and British society, politics, and law. In this theoretical chapter, Bowen elaborates an empirical and normative argument proposing that 'practical convergence' might offer a novel way of thinking about religious adaptation to a liberal environment that does not ask Muslims to renounce aspects of their religion. Differing from a modernized version of religion, 'practical convergence' involves reasoning towards a shared horizon from distinct starting points, without requiring that either party accept the other's starting point or reasoning process.

While Bowen does not engage with the anthropological literature on secularism, this chapter moves significantly beyond recent debates – which have often presented piety and secular-liberalism as incommensurable – to propose a model in which these two frameworks might converge. Whether practical convergence operates also in other contexts of religious pluralism remains a question. However, Bowen's monograph presents a pressing and refreshing perspective on how Islam can exist as part of – rather than in parallel or conflict with – European values and norms.

GIULIA LIBERATORE *University of Edinburgh*

BRIDGES, KHIARA M. *The poverty of privacy rights*. x, 279 pp., bibliogr. Stanford: Univ. Press, 2017. £20.99 (paper)

Khiara M. Bridges' book *The poverty of privacy rights* analyses the extent to which women who experience poverty in the United States are able to claim their right to privacy. The author argues that women living in poverty are subject to significant privacy invasions imposed on them by the state; particularly, because of the state's assumptions that the poor are at a higher risk of neglecting or mistreating their children.

Consequently the state's presumed goal is the protection of the child. The author's overarching argument in this book is that the state engages in a moral construction of poverty, which in turn functions to justify a variety of limits on poor women's ability to exercise their privacy rights in the United States. In other words, the author claims that the state's power becomes virtually unlimited once the righteousness of its incursions is rationalized on moral grounds. This claim is not new, as there is substantial scholarship in anthropology and other social sciences, as well as across geopolitical contexts, which demonstrates that moral positions of those in power go far in justifying laws and practices that limit individual and group rights. Nevertheless, the book makes perhaps a somewhat stronger contribution with its attention to the close relationship between poverty and privacy.

For example, Bridges argues that both poor and wealthy mothers are similarly 'visible' to the state in the sense that demographic and personal data are collected by their healthcare institution when they give birth, be it through the public/state or the private hospital systems. However, only the poor are subjected to further scrutiny. Poor women are more likely to give birth in public state-run hospitals with subsidized healthcare, and such facilities are more likely to test the new-born for the presence of drugs. In contrast, such scrutiny is unlikely to happen in private hospitals (which are typically perceived as offering higher-quality care in the United States), where wealthier women typically choose to give birth.

Subsequently, Bridges argues, more frequent testing of new-borns also results in a higher rate of identifying and documenting poor women's drug use. This leads to state interventions as cases of suspected child abuse are by law referred to the authorities, and to a reinforcement of portrayals of poor women as substance abusers, and therefore presumably of questionable moral fibre. The wealthy women with substance abuse problems are less likely to be caught when they give birth because of a lesser suspicion towards them and less testing of new-borns. The comparison of the privacy invasion experienced by the poor because of their poverty rather than their visibility to the authorities per se highlights the unequal judgement implied in the presupposition of 'the dysfunction of poor mothers and poor parents while making no similar presupposition about their wealthier counterparts' (p. 125).

In the area of reproductive privacy, the author offers a thoughtful analysis of the paradoxical

nature of US policy. On the one hand, the Title X family planning programmes severely restrict access to abortion for women who rely on state-subsidized reproductive health services. On the other hand, the family cap on state support for needy families disallows additional assistance if the woman gives birth to more than the state-allowed number of children. In other words, the state limits poor women's ability to control fertility, but also punishes the families when extra children are born in these families. Bridges argues compellingly that this is consistent with the moral construction of poverty – the discourse in which poor women cannot be trusted with their reproduction decision-making.

However, the author's dichotomized categories of poor versus wealthy mothers constitute an over-simplified model. This is especially so given that over 3 million Americans are uninsured, but many of them are not poor enough to qualify for state assistance, therefore there is a significant proportion of the population that does not fit either the poor or the wealthy category, indicating that the reality of access to care is more nuanced than the book allows.

Methodologically, this is not an ethnography but rather a meticulous analysis of numerous legal cases drawn from the US court system, and, as such, the narrative style is on the dry side. Students of anthropology accustomed to rich ethnographic portrayals of lived experiences and a narrative storyline will not find them here. The book primarily contributes to the legal studies scholarship, and may be suitable for teaching in such courses.

JOANNA MISHTAL *University of Central Florida*

NADER, LAURA. *Contrarian anthropology: the unwritten rules of academia*. xiii, 489 pp., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, £28.00 (paper)

Laura Nader has been one of American anthropology's leading figures since the 1960s, holding a chair in anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, for over half a century. She is one of the founders of legal anthropology, but also has been a profound, highly documented, loyal, and liberal voice throughout the decades. With this collection of essays, she gives an interesting overview of the topics she has been working on. However diverse they may seem, they indeed tell the story of a deeply engaged and at the same time highly scholarly anthropologist, who takes her role of intellectual very seriously. By that I mean 'intellectual' in the

continental (French) sense of responsible scientist, who speaks out about society and politics regularly. The collection is awe-inspiring for taking this stance. Of course, if you take such a stand on anthropology, you become contrarian, and that proves not an easy walk in the park.

The book opens with some famous articles from the 1960s, notably 'Up the anthropologist' (chap. 1) on studying up in anthropology. It also presents some of the earliest work on anthropology of law, conflict resolution, and energy; themes that have grown more important over the years. It becomes clear throughout the volume that it may not be an easy road to walk, but it is both relevant and necessary to hold a critical attitude all the time. Sometimes (notably chapter 5 on the 'subordination of women') a paper was refused initially because it compared one 'bad attitude' – the forcing of veils on women in the Islamic world – with a presumption of Western progress which can include teaching young women to 'choose' make-overs, aiming to attain a Barbie-doll-like idealized appearance. Today this point can be made even more forcibly, though still cautiously, but thirty years ago it barred the way to publication. Examples like these on (women's) rights discourse as well as on topics relating to energy policies reveal what it means to do 'contrarian anthropology'.

Yes, that takes courage, but it also takes a political and intellectual climate that leaves room for such unpopular thoughts and research. When that space is threatened by the powers that be, it is time to stand up and fight the latter. One such instance is chapter 13 on anthropology during the Cold War ('The phantom factor'), first published in *The Cold War and the university* (1998), edited by Noam Chomsky, on the influence of the military on social sciences and the humanities. Decades later, no one could claim that the book's authors got it all wrong, but along the way job opportunities were rearranged in such a way that hardly any scholar is willing to stick out his or her neck in a similar way today. Of course, Laura Nader has observed that trend and criticizes the evolution in the most recent essays included in the collection (e.g. 'Breaking the silence', chap. 19).

The final chapters offer a few synthetic papers: on comparative law, on plundering the rest of the earth by the so-called 'free market states'. The last section also has a few papers from a recent focus in Laura's work, especially strong in her book *What the rest think of the West* (2015). Some of the material from that line of research is presented here: what can be found in terms of

intellectual, often scholarly work by non-Western observers of the West? What can we learn from them? How can we learn to listen? In a world where refugees are heading for the rich North – both the United States and Europe – the ability to listen and discuss honestly with each other may become crucial for life on earth in general. What dreams and eventual fantasies do ‘they’ have about us? What is our responsibility? What part have we played in the spread of inequality and hopelessness in the South, and why can ‘we’ not be truthful about this? Why do we fall back on the discourse of a purely ideological war between cultures, rather than take our own human rights project seriously? These are fundamental questions, and especially now that populist regimes have begun to speak about others in terms of culture and cultural differences in a rather essentialist way, they are on the table of anthropologists and other social sciences. Laura Nader continues this line of research, superbly. Her book must be read.

RIK PINXTEN *Ghent University*

SUFRIN, CAROLYN. *Jailcare: finding the safety net for women behind bars*. xii, 311 pp., illus., bibliogr. Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2018. £24.00 (paper)

Carolyn Sufrin straddles two worlds: she is both obstetrician and anthropologist in her relationships with the women cycling in and out of the San Francisco jail. This ambiguity is repeated in the themes of her ethnography, *Jailcare: finding the safety net for women behind bars*. In arguing that jail is the new safety net for marginalized pregnant American women, Sufrin shows how it is therefore a site of care as well as violence. Using the unique access afforded by her dual role, she chronicles the quotidian ambivalence between degradation and security, denial and connection, and kindness and coercion, which characterizes interactions in jail.

Far from being incommensurate, care and violence are intimately entwined, Sufrin claims. She defines care as ‘the way someone comes to matter’ (p. 6). It results from paying attention to the others with whom one’s own existence is always entangled. One of the book’s central claims is that care must be understood as an everyday intersubjective process, not predetermined by disciplinary power relationships or institutional subordination. To argue this, Sufrin uses quotations and life histories from her informants to good effect; in particular, a poem

written by one of the inmates forms a poignant closing meditation.

Ambiguity also appears in the fluid way the monograph’s subjects move between life in jail and life on the streets. While prison is (at least in popular conception) set apart from mainstream society, people enter and exit jail with a regularity directly connected to their marginality. Since life is rough both inside and outside, many inmates feel ambivalence about which is preferable: they desire jail as much as they hate it.

In some ways, jail is a safe place where inmates can paradoxically ‘be a version of themselves that felt normal’ (p. 241). This stems from one of the two cruel ironies in the book. While the 1976 *Estelle v. Gamble* Supreme Court decision ruled that it was unconstitutional ‘cruel and unusual punishment’ to withhold medical care from inmates, no such cruelty is recognized when medical care is out of reach for those who are not incarcerated. Thus prisoners are the only segment of the US population with a constitutional right to healthcare. The second irony pertains to motherhood: because motherhood is intensely moralized and ideals of ‘deservingness’ shadow discourses about rights, marginalized mothers are punished extra harshly for ‘bad behaviour’ and ‘endangering the baby’. However, because motherhood is also romanticized, it can have powerful humanizing effects. Mothers are both revered and feared: they ‘generate cultural anxieties about the social order they have the power to reproduce’ (p. 130) and carry an ambiguous symbolic status’. Jail amplifies that ambiguity. What to make of a fetus – that innocent, idealized citizen – in the womb of someone being punished for committing a crime? Does this mean the fetus is incarcerated?’ (p. 131). Guards and staff display this ambivalence: they are variously described as ‘angry because they feel bad for the babies’, showing resigned cynicism, or feeling ‘genuine concern for the well-being of woman and fetus’ (pp. 134-5).

Relatedly, motherhood is a cruel optimism. Sufrin describes a common aspiration among pregnant inmates that childbirth will motivate a sustainable life change, an escape route out of drugs, petty crime, and the ability to mother their child. Yet without adequate support and resources outside the institution, most fresh starts fail. Many pregnant inmates straddle a contradiction: they are drug addicts, but care about the babies they carry. Sufrin writes: ‘[V]ersions of motherhood available in jail were deeply contingent and necessarily limited. And yet some women felt energized by these

opportunities, even desired this jail-cultivated motherhood' (p. 231).

Sufrin could have pushed further on two counts. First, care and discipline intertwine in many other kin and institutional relationships, and comfort and constraint are uneasily but inextricably linked in many experiences of home. She mentions this, but does not examine how the irony of wanting to be in jail is an ambivalence that has wider resonance, even as it describes an especially painful reality. Secondly, she frames the issue as a failure, not a critique, of the liberal state. This is related to her decision to not engage race as a thematic lens (p. 14). Sufrin calls jailcare a symptom of broader social and economic failures to care for society's most marginalized people, a stopgap that merely sustains lives instead of improving them. By not unpacking why that failure is occurring, she implies that it is a sort of moral oversight instead of deeply entrenched in racist, colonial, capitalist ways of thinking and being. These points aside, Sufrin's analysis is insightful and convincing. I recommend this book to scholars of care, reproduction, carcerality, and gender in the United States, and found it an excellent addition to my advanced undergraduate courses on these topics.

ANDREA FORD *University of Chicago*

Modernity's transformations

CEPEK, MICHAEL L.; photographs by BEAR GUERRA. *Life in oil: Cofán survival in the petroleum fields of Amazonia*. xvi, 286 pp., maps, illus., bibliogr. Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 2018. £20.99 (paper)

Life in oil is a lively, first-person narrative account of the author's long-term ethnographic research with the Cofán people living in Ecuador. From the time he was an undergraduate student, Michael Cepek has spent many years and numerous summers living in several different Cofán communities. His first book, *A future for Amazonia* (2012), examines an intentional community carved out of the rainforest that is equal parts conservation area and safe haven for the Cofán. His new book recounts his experiences living in the contaminated village of Dureno, which has been polluted for decades by the petroleum extraction carried out by Texaco, Chevron, Petroecuador, and other oil companies.

This book *stinks*, but in a productive way. From the moment Cepek grabs your attention by telling the story of leaning forward to wash his face in a river covered by oil, you begin to smell it.

Cofán people say this themselves: they describe fish caught from polluted waters as *tssu'jutssi* (stinky), and *keroseneme'tssi* (like kerosene). The Cofán have an elaborate vocabulary to describe the properties of *petróleo* or *crudo*, such as:

Ámundetssi (dirty), *sintssi* (black or dark), *tu'atssi* (sticky), *sampe'chatssi* (thick), *châpetssi* (soft), *yaya'pa'caon* (like fat), *ccoquui'can* (like the dark beeswax used to make blowguns), *tena'tssi* (like water covered with thin pools of grease or fat) . . . and *qquitssatssatssi* (like syrupy liquid that slowly drips down one's throat) (p. 132).

They know this because oil is seemingly everywhere and on everything: it contaminates their drinking water after disconcertingly frequent leaks and spills of various magnitudes; you accidentally fall into pools of it at night when you are hunting; you see, kill, and eat animals coated in it; and the smell gets in your nose and never gets out: *tssu'jutssi*.

However, Cepek wants us to know about more than the problems caused by petroleum contamination, and to see beyond one-dimensional accounts of the Cofán as endangered victims. He does this by presenting experience-near descriptions of individuals with whom he has had long-standing relationships: an older woman whose house he stays in, his godson, a community leader, a famously feisty shaman, and so forth. As a recent interloper in the ethnography of lowland Amazonia, I am often struck by the wide gulf between structuralist accounts and recent work in ontology, on the one hand, in which actual people and their personalities fade into the background, if they are present at all, and the rich tradition of person-centred accounts of Amazonian peoples like this one, on the other.

Most vivid of all are the descriptions of shamans in action: inviting you to drink hallucinogenic *yaje* (ayahuasca); doing battle with shamans in other communities; and revealing the double-sided nature of their practice, that the power to heal is also the power to harm. Cepek additionally provides exemplary insight into how shamanic activities influence people's sense of agency.

Moreover, this is a personal account for Cepek. He writes about himself not only to draw readers in, but also to provide empathetic accounts of Cofán experiences: from what it is like to confront a fresh oil spill in the morning, to what it is like to experience threats of violence from outsiders, and even how his own near-death

experience helps him understand the health impacts of petroleum on the Cofán.

As someone who has conducted fieldwork on the environmental impacts of resource extraction, I wish the author had provided comparative examples to show how widespread these problems are for indigenous peoples. I also wondered about his rather conservative description of the proper role of anthropologists: 'I am an anthropologist, and my job was to listen to the Cofán's side of the story' (p. 246), rather than participate in or contribute to their political struggle, especially when the corporations involved are located in one's backyard, although I know Cepek has played a more active political role working with the Cofán than he acknowledges here.

The smell of oil will stay in my nose for a long time. I will think about Dureno and the people Cepek writes about when I fill my car with petrol, or when I read about the ongoing legal battle against ChevronTexaco for polluting the Ecuadorian Amazon where they live. I suspect that's precisely what Cepek intended with his powerful, moving, and accessible account of *Life in oil*. This book is highly recommended for students learning about indigenous peoples and resource extraction, the ethics of energy, and contemporary life in the Amazon, and should be at the top of everyone's list of ethnographies written for a broader, public audience.

STUART KIRSCH *University of Michigan*

KHAN, AISHA (ed.). *Islam and the Americas*. ix, 348 pp., illus., bibliogr. Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2015. £77.95 (cloth)

North American commentators on Islam tend to look at the world through the prism of the war on terror. General John Kelly, just before he joined President Trump's White House, claimed that 100-50 Muslims left Latin America and the Caribbean annually to join ISIS in Syria; a claim refuted by Aisha Khan. Khan, a professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at New York University, has conducted extensive research on religion and race, particularly in the Caribbean region (see her *Callaloo nation*, 2004). *Islam and the Americas* casts a welcome and valuable spotlight on the Muslim communities south of the US border with an emphasis on Muslim women. The contributors are almost all from the United States or the Caribbean and ten of the thirteen chapters in the book also are written by female scholars. The former point raises the

question: is there limited interest in the subject in South America? Does the fascination with matters Islamic in North America have to do with the lavish funding for security studies? The title thus is misleading, as the collection is not about Islam and the Americas but focuses on societies south of the United States.

Khan, like the other authors in this collection, places the tiny under-studied Muslim population of Latin America – one and a half million in all, one million of whom are Sunnis – in historical context. She notes, for example, that the ships of the Spanish and Portuguese sailing to the New World in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries 'were probably manned by Andalusian Muslim mariners' (p. 34). Then there are the substantial populations of enslaved West African Muslims who arrived during the Atlantic slave trade.

Following the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, Muslims were recruited from places as far away as India and Indonesia to serve as plantation labour. In the twentieth century, there was a revival of Islam among those of African descent linked to the rediscovery of Islam among African-Americans in the United States through movements like the Nation of Islam, which was also shaped by a succession of missionary efforts coming from different regions and sects in the Muslim world. These communities were subsequently subject to modernization and globalization and now face the post-9/11 challenges of Islamophobia and stigmatization.

Let me highlight some key chapters and interesting points for the purposes of this short review. Khan in the introduction produces some unexpected and consequential Islamic connections for the foundations of nations in the Americas. She notes that scholars have argued that the name of Boukman of Haiti, known for launching the slave-driven Haitian Revolution in 1791, is a French approximation of Book Man, given for his ownership of the Qur'an. Other leaders of slave rebellions in Haiti, François Mackandal and Cécile Fatiman, we learn, are similarly 'associated with Islam and Muslim identity' (p. 24).

Many of the chapters focus on the adaptation of Islam in its new settings. For example, Sandra Cañas Cuevas's chapter 8 is about Mayan female converts to Islam in Chiapas, Mexico: 'Maya Muslims often make reference to the life of persecution lived by the Prophet, comparing his life with their own experience' (p. 170). Mayan women do not mind the veil, although they are not ready to wear it in public, have reservations regarding polygamy, and claim they were

instructed not to eat maize by the Andalusians who converted them. The final chapter, by Patricia Mohammed, is entitled 'Island currents, global aesthetics: Islamic iconography in Trinidad' and presents a general overview of Muslim history, religious practice, dress, and architecture, including mosques, in Trinidad. Writing about relations on the island between Hindus and Muslims, she detects 'a very divergent yet tolerant Hindu and Islamic aesthetic that obtains in Trinidad to this day', which comes from the Mughals in India, who 'fostered a sophisticated civilization based on religious toleration' (p. 301). Mohammed also describes the main Islamic holiday in the Caribbean, 'Hosay – the Caribbean's Muharram, commemoration of the martyrdom of the Prophet Mohammed's grandsons Hassan and Hussein at the Battle of Kerbala' (p. 306). She notes that Hosay 'is the only celebration in this religion that has wide Islamic and non-Islamic public participation and is vibrant with color, sound, and movement' (p. 311).

Islam and the Americas explores issues of cultural hybridity, diaspora communities, and the search for identity, and should encourage anthropologists to pack their bags and head for the field. They had better hurry, there is already a rival volume in print (M. de M.L. Narbona, P.G. Pinto & J.T. Karam, *Crescent over another horizon*, 2015).

AKBAR AHMED *American University*

KIPNIS, ANDREW B. *From village to city: social transformation in a Chinese county seat*. 263 pp., maps, tables, illus., bibliogr. Oakland: Univ. of California Press, 2016. £24.00 (paper)

With this fine-grained ethnography of a rapidly changing urban area in China, Andrew Kipnis upends a number of fundamental assumptions underlying modernization and urbanization theories, while setting out his original concept of 'recombinant transformation'. The challenge Kipnis poses to the theoretical categories of rural and urban, tradition and modernity, and even modernity and postmodernity gathers strength from the particularities of his fieldsite: an industrial town whose portrayal could be seen to fall between the conventional tropes of modernization and urbanization. The unique vantage point of studying this in-between space over time emerges as Kipnis describes how the county town of Zouping in Shandong grew from a sleepy settlement with a population of 30,000 to a bustling city with over 300,000 residents

during his three decades of research in the area.

Zouping's development defies urbanization patterns in two particularly captivating ways: first, Zouping deviates from the urbanization patterns of sprawling industrial development in the Pearl River Delta and the burgeoning small county seats being spearheaded by enterprising locals across China. In contrast, the rise of Zouping's largest employer, the Weiqiao Group, reveals how 'local capital' became embedded in certain localities and embodied in particular persons. Weiqiao's corporate commitment to the locale fostered a relatively secure workforce despite industrial decline, as the enterprise expanded beyond textiles to diversified investments, while retaining a labour force ranging from life-long contract employees to temporary rural migrant workers. Under the de-industrializing pressures, many urbanites reorientated towards the emerging commercial and service sectors, invested in real estate, pursued higher education, or entered the expanding bureaucracy, while migrants struggled to join their swelling ranks despite sustaining rural ties, or simply returned to home towns.

A second set of particularities results from Zouping's development falling in-between accounts of heavy regulation and central planning, on the one hand, and narratives of spontaneous and competitive urbanization, on the other. Instead, tracing economic transition and spatial reordering in Zouping reveals how contestations, exceptions, and irregularities become absorbed into normal development practices. This gradual and systemic transformation challenges more commonplace narratives of rupture and revolution, further throwing into question the before-and-after shake-ups that characterize many modernization and urbanization theories. Kipnis shows how real estate zoning, infrastructural projects, industrialization drives, and the rise of third-sector employment occurred as established elites, privileged workers, and cash-strapped migrants planned, invested, and worked in pursuit of different visions of the future.

A seasoned ethnographer, Kipnis exhibits refreshing methodological creativity and astute clarity in describing his varied fieldwork approaches. His research in Zouping ranges from early fieldwork on rural relationships to later investigations on education, and a recent engagement with state bureaucrats, resourceful planners, and a powerful corporation. As he draws insights from experiences as diverse as attending Maoist song competitions to hanging out at ice skating rinks, his research strategies reveal the

complexities of doing fieldwork in China while providing lessons for all ethnographers facing the challenges of fieldwork access.

Kipnis's ambitious theoretical contribution to rethinking modernization and urbanization theories through 'recombinant transformation' postulates that political, economic, and social elements are not simply replaced, but transmute into novel entities marked by the characteristics of previous forms. Although 'recombinant transformation' offers a far-reaching basis for theoretical critique, this broad concept could have been further enmeshed with the smaller, yet equally captivating, insights across the substantive chapters, especially in relation to inequality. For example, continuities of kinship could be more fully analysed through their powerful intersections with class differentiation in Zouping – from the majority shareholders running the Weiqiao Corporation like a 'family business', to the households shying away from factory work as a faltering 'category of desire' under post-industrial pressures. Maintaining that Zouping lacks strong class differences, Kipnis instead organizes the case study chapters around local categories that highlight generational shifts and viricentral continuities in families.

As state bureaucrats, corporate elites, urban residents, and rural migrants actually forge uncertain futures, the playing field offered by 'recombinant transformation' nonetheless reveals itself as deeply unequal. Addressing this inequality head-on would provide a fuller picture of the locally specific yet broadly comparable 'power geographies' Kipnis all-too-briefly mentions. Nonetheless, elevating 'recombinant transformation' to a more general theory enables him to move beyond linear and cyclical modernization theories in order to explore urbanization as part of future de-industrialization in this in-between space in the book's concluding pages. In a twist most likely resulting from both planning and improvisation, the book itself emerges as a recombinant entity, as Kipnis weaves a century of grand theories, decades of meticulous methodology, and innumerable accounts of captivating experiences into a wonderfully varied and intricately woven urban fabric.

CHARLOTTE BRUCKERMANN *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology*

NYÍRI, PÁL & DANIELLE TAN, foreword by WANG GUNGWU. *Chinese encounters in Southeast Asia: how people, money, and ideas from China are changing a region*. 296 pp., maps, tables, illus.,

bibliogr. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 2017. £22.99 (paper)

The intensifying interactions between China and Southeast Asia deserve close anthropological attention. We should ask how best to capture the intersections between structural forces, lived experience, and historical legacies which drive rapid social transformations. *Chinese encounters in Southeast Asia* is an excellent example of how anthropologists can do this.

In their introduction, Pál Nyíri and Danielle Tan state that the book aims to move away from a discussion about China-Southeast Asia relations that 'has focused on the rivalry for regional domination between the United States and China to the point of sidelining any other angle of approach' (p. 6). Additionally, they note that one pattern that emerges from the collection is that Chinese 'soft power' is strongest in countries where upward mobility is economically and politically limited, and where historical ties to China are weak (pp. 18-19). Moreover, the so-called 'China Model' appears more attractive for poorer countries (Cambodia, Burma, and Indonesia) than for the more developed ones (Singapore and Malaysia). Chapter 8 by Kevin Woods on Burma suggests that China appeals to poorer countries not only because the latter need money, but also because they have been marginalized by, or even excluded from, the Western-dominated world market. In comparison, richer countries tend to have benefited from the Cold War, in which the exclusion of China, and other socialist countries, created especially favourable conditions for Western-supported states.

China's isolation during the Cold War enhanced its political and economic autonomy, and it is this self-sufficiency, rather than global integration, that makes the China Model appealing to many in the region. As an Indonesian intellectual told Johanes Herlijanto (chap. 10): Chinese leaders' 'independent mental attitude, which is reflected in their behaviour, makes it difficult for them to be dictated to by international financial organizations' such as the World Trade Organization (p. 207). What China means to the people in the region is to a great extent a function of both China's structural position and that of the region in the world.

Nyíri's chapter 1 on the relationship between China, the Chinese, and Cambodia combines close observation and a structural perspective in order to disentangle complex engagements. He notes that '[f]or the parents of today's young

Chinese Cambodians, the language of the home was Teochiu and the outside language was Khmer. For the younger generation the language of the home is Khmer and the aspirational outside languages are Mandarin and English' (p. 35). This code-switching must be understood as a result of multiple changes in both China and Cambodia. Nor is transition merely a matter of cultural identity. Nyíri details how Chinese elites in Cambodia insert themselves between investors from mainland China and the Cambodian government, creating a local context in which China and Chineseness are reimagined.

Nyíri and Herlijanto capture the dynamics of these encounters so well because their analyses are firmly rooted in the region: the volume is Southeast Asian-orientated and pays close attention to local actors' agency. For instance, Brenda Yeoh and Weiqiang Lin (chap. 2) point out that the resentment among Chinese Singaporeans towards recent migrants from the mainland has a lot to do with Singaporean citizens' critical view of the *Singaporean state's* immigration policies. Caroline Hua's wonderfully rich chapter 6 depicts China-Philippines interactions as transnational entanglements between two types of 'politico-business elites' (p. 122), who interact directly with minimum brokerage by ethnic Chinese. The Chinese are represented by the 'princelings' who emerged from the state-led market-orientated reform, while the Philippines' politically connected oligarchies have a much longer history and have always been close to foreign capital.

Hew Wai Weng (chap. 3) on Muslim entrepreneurs who migrate from China to Indonesia sheds light on another aspect of the relationship between China and the Chinese. The Chinese Muslims identify with China, yet they feel socially home in Indonesia because of their religion. In chapter 7, Danielle Tan argues that 'Chinese capital and migration have become the keystone of the Lao state's strategy to render the highlands more "legible", profitable, and governable' (p. 143). Thus the Chinese projects enhance, rather than undermine, Lao sovereignty.

Other chapters pay attention to the lived experiences of such encounters. Aranya Siriphon (chap. 4) delineates the intricacies of networking in north Thailand; while Caroline Grillo and Juan Zhang (chap. 5) delve into the sex markets on the China-Vietnam borderland; and Chris Lyttleton (chap. 11) contemplates desires and aspiration as important components of human interactions.

This collection examines the practices, network dynamics, and multiple perceptions of the China-Southeast Asia encounter, while simultaneously placing concrete experiences within multi-layered and multi-faceted contexts, thus folding ethnographic data into structural analyses. By presenting broad patterns, examining lived experiences, and identifying a space for policy and public interventions in the China-Southeast Asia encounters, this book is truly valuable on many fronts.

BIAO XIANG *University of Oxford*

SILVERMAN, PHILIP & SHIENPEI CHANG. *Bridging generations in Taiwan: lifestyle and identity of mothers and daughters*. xiii, 115 pp., tables, bibliogr. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. £52.95 (cloth)

It is enormously invigorating to read a book revisiting classic issues in Chinese kinship with the lives of mothers and daughters as a starting point. Philip Silverman and Shienpei Chang's *Bridging generations in Taiwan* raises new questions about women's lives as they have been transformed through the rapid changes of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century society in Taiwan. This intimate study of relatedness explores how transitions in the modern political economy of Chinese societies affect family and gender relations, and opens a new door for thinking about contemporary patriarchy as it is refigured in East Asian Chinese societies.

The ethnographic study itself is situated in rural working-class families and focuses on mother-daughter pairs, comparing the lives and circumstances of mothers born in the 1940s with those of daughters born in the 1960s. This choice allows a close look at the contrast between the very hard post-war years in which the mothers came to maturity and the much more prosperous and open era in which their daughters came of age. Importantly, the study goes beyond generational comparison to examine how these changes affected the relationship between the mother and daughter in each pair.

The research originated precisely in an exploration of the tensions felt to have appeared in mother-daughter relations across this historically marked transition. Shienpei Chang departed from her own lived experience and recruited five dyads in, or close to, her own family and social network. The scale means that this is situated as an exploratory study posing questions for future research, but the intimacy of the connection and of the interviewing, together with

the meticulous reporting of the interview components give the study particular depth.

The research design had two components: a narrative life review or life history, and a structured accounting of a wide range of lifestyle elements or activities designed to indicate the everyday changes in opportunities available to the younger generation as increased prosperity, higher education, and transnational opening deepened the gulf between mothers and daughters. These enabled daughters to have a relatively wider range of choice and autonomy, albeit still constrained by what I will encapsulate as a flexibilization of Chinese patriarchy.

While the ethnography is specifically of rural Taiwanese (and not of the post-war arrivals from the Mainland), the parallels with transforming practices in the People's Republic of China and elsewhere in culturally Chinese Asia give the work provocative resonances as gender and gender hierarchy are remade through a wider, more fluid, and sometimes challenged range of variations. Previous, path-setting ethnographies that have gendered anthropological understandings of kinship, androcentry, and patriarchy in women's lives in the earlier period are drawn upon very effectively. This work contextualizes and underlies the often harrowing accounts of intra-familial exploitation and interpersonal oppression reported by all five of the older generation of mothers, as well as their formidable contributions to familial livelihood and well-being.

One of the more striking comparative implications concerns the mother-daughter relationship itself. The interviews with the mothers in these cases uniformly underlined a near-complete rupture between this generation of women and their own mothers and natal kin. The separation was actively created and maintained by their marital families, detaching this generation of women from their closest potential support networks and leaving them vulnerable during conflicts that might arise in their marital families. This extreme situation, and its lived consequences, powerfully complements research in the People's Republic of China that has identified regions where women's ties with their natal families have provided significant customary supports that have been protective and sustaining, as well as those where sharply varying circumstances are found between women who do, or do not, have such support for diverse reasons, including distance from natal kin, lack of living natal kin, restricted non-kin ties, or limited economic means.

This book will be of particular interest to those attentive to the centrality of the mother-daughter

relationship and its change over time. Even the earlier generation of mothers, who had had limited protection themselves and whose hardships were carried forward in fraught relations with their daughters, appear as critical and supportive figures in such key decisions as providing daughters with further education. For the younger generation, the authors identify new explorations in their expanding social and conceptual worlds – notably including changes in parenting practices and maternal ties. They find that there is retention of gendered facets of classic familial values and practices, such as caring for elders being the responsibility of daughters-in-law, concurrently with their selective and creative reframing, as in the shift towards care by daughters. Here the authors detect branching routes under construction to reimagine – however subtly and diffusely – androcentric ideas of gender, family, and patriarchy.

ELLEN R. JUDD *University of Manitoba*

STEAD, VICTORIA C. *Becoming landowners: entanglements of custom and modernity in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste*. xv, 216 pp., illus., bibliogr. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2017. £73.50 (cloth)

The ethnographic content of Victoria Stead's *Becoming landowners* consists of an intriguing set of interviews and observations conducted during visits to five villages in Madang province in Papua New Guinea (PNG), and to one village and three or four urban settlements in Timor-Leste. The results are woven together in a story about people becoming landowners because land is the object or commodity through which they engage with the external forces that threaten their livelihoods in one way or another. The book's title thus conveys the core of the argument, which is that this form of becoming is also a kind of 'entanglement' between the forces of 'custom and modernity'.

Given the significance assigned to customary institutions and practices in this narrative, it does seem rather odd that there is no account of what these forces actually are (or were). Should the reader assume that they are identical in all parts of both countries? That they are part of a single Melanesian – or possibly Pacific Island – cultural complex? Or should it be inferred that they are now beyond the reach of the ethnographer precisely because of their 'entanglement'? The author reminds us of an observation made by many other anthropologists that the word *kastom*

is widely used in Melanesia to designate something that is already compromised, if not created, through the experience of 'modern' institutions, so perhaps ethnographers are no more capable than 'customary landowners' of transcending this semantic barrier.

If we look in the opposite direction, modernity appears to be an equally undifferentiated, yet mysterious, thing. The governments of PNG and Timor-Leste, along with all aid agencies and foreign investors present in these two countries, are supposedly united in their pursuit of a single neoliberal project that includes the simultaneous and paradoxical alienation of customary land and the creation of its customary owners. The axiomatic assumption of a single neoliberal world order has become part of anthropology's conventional wisdom, but the reader might still wonder whether it serves to illuminate or obscure the different histories of these two countries, and hence the significance of the case studies drawn from each of them.

More than twenty years ago, I published a paper (C. Filer, 'Compensation, rent and power in Papua New Guinea', in *Compensation for resource development in Papua New Guinea*, 1997) in which it was argued that Papua New Guineans had 'become' customary landowners in a manner that was closely related to the emergence of claims for compensation from various forms of large-scale resource development. No such argument could be made about Timor-Leste, where such activities have mainly been confined to the exploitation of offshore oil and gas deposits that have no local landowners attached to them. Indeed, it is clear from the accounts presented in this book that the becoming has largely consisted of land titling and resettlement projects initiated as part of a larger state-building programme supported by foreign aid agencies after the end of the Indonesian occupation in 1999. There have been no comparable activities in PNG.

Thus Stead's suggestion that foreign agents of neoliberalism somehow managed to pervert the direction of PNG's land policy process in the 1980s or 1990s does not convince me. Recent amendments to the land laws that allow groups of customary landowners to voluntarily register titles to their land were actually amongst the measures recommended by indigenous political leaders around the time of Independence in 1975, as part of a package of land laws that were meant to embody customary 'Melanesian' principles. This package supplemented, but did not replace, the package inherited from the Australian colonial administration, so PNG has had a messy sort of legal dualism in land matters ever since.

This type of complexity cannot readily be accommodated in a Manichean vision of the world (or of two countries) in which all customary things are good (if not entirely pure), while all modern things – including every institution of the state – are uniformly neoliberal and nasty. This does not appear to be a view that Stead has imposed upon her ethnographic evidence, but one that is derived from the non-governmental organizations that make occasional appearances as actors in the contests that she documents. So while the metaphor of 'entanglement' may conjure up a rather bleak vision of customary flies trapped in a neoliberal spider's web, there is a subtext in which these other characters are engaged in various attempts to get them out of it. That is a subject on which the book does offer some insights, but it could have told us more. Even so, anyone with an interest in the politics of customary land (and landowners) will find much food for thought in this provocative account of its persistence as a problem with no obvious solution.

COLIN FILER *Australian National University*

TOMBA, LUIGI. *The government next door: neighborhood politics in urban China*. 225 pp., illus., bibliogr. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 2014. £15.50 (paper)

In the past four decades of the reform era, urban neighbourhoods in China have been utilized by political scientists and sociologists as an entry point to an examination of the authoritarian state's changing governing practices. Luigi Tomba's *The government next door: neighborhood politics in urban China* provides a thorough analysis both of the multiplicity of political and social relations and interactions at the urban grassroots level, and of the variety of opinions held by state and non-state actors about the residential communities.

What I admire most is that Tomba adopts a synthetic approach which views neighbourhoods not only as administrative institutions, but also as places created by an assortment of actors. This approach contributes to one of the book's most important findings: that is, the divide-and-rule strategy towards urban neighbourhoods. In the process of implementing housing reforms, the government intentionally promoted social clustering and spatial segregation through encouraging the construction of large-scale gated communities. These grouped, or even stratified, residential spaces further determine the different governing techniques imposed upon them. While

the well-off residents in gated communities enjoy significant autonomy, the disadvantaged groups in socially troubled neighbourhoods are subjected to increased state control. As Tomba powerfully points out: 'Because of the pervasive involvement of public actors in controlling the form and organization of residential spaces, where one lives determines the type of governance one experiences, and ultimately, affects one's level of autonomy from or dependency on the state' (p. 44).

One important aspect of Tomba's study is that he analyses neighbourhood politics in association with the causes, and impacts, of the emergence of the middle/homeowning class in urban China. The middle class was socially engineered by the state through the process of housing privatization. Its selective incentives and subsidization policies resulted in an increase of the middle class, which is mainly composed of urbanites and public employees. This particularly fostered middle class was exploited by the state as an exemplar of good citizens, on the one hand, and a powerful tool to achieve an appreciation in urban land prices, on the other. This line of analysis discloses the alliance between the state, private investors, and middle-class homeowners in the processes of urban development and gentrification.

Yet my critique of the book lies in the adoption of 'consensus', or the acceptance of the legitimacy of governmental discourses and daily practices, as the key to understanding neighbourhood politics in urban China. Tomba argues that 'stability' is the universally held view that undergirds daily interactions and practices between the state and residents. This contention, however, faces several problems. To begin with, the discourses or frames used by residents should be regarded as strategic choices rather than the result of unanimity. Studies of contentious politics and homeowner activism in particular suggest that activists adopt slogans promoted by the central government with the aims of both increasing the legitimacy of their claims, and thus chances of success, on the one hand, and lessening the possibility of local government repression, on the other.

In addition, Chinese middle-class homeowners, just like their counterparts in many other countries, are in favour of social order and stability. This accords with the very nature of being middle class: that is, a moderate or conservative force within society. This does not necessarily mean that the Chinese middle class is in agreement with the state with regard to the legitimacy of the political regime. While being

beneficiaries of the housing reforms, Chinese homeowners have expressed a variety of grievances related to owning and managing their properties. The targets of homeowner activism are not confined only to developers and property management companies, but more often than not include the urban growth coalitions, the injustice of the legal system, and the lack of associations that represent homeowners' interests, all of which directly involve the state. In fact, defending property rights has become a driving force in both the call for liberation and the collective action undertaken by middle-class homeowners. Their actions no longer focus on localized, specific interests but extend to cross-neighbourhood, or even cross-city, agendas. Nevertheless, this book provides valuable insights on the political, social, and spatial relations in Chinese neighbourhoods and I recommend it for those who are interested in neighbourhood politics, urban governance, and state-society relations in urban China.

XIAOYI SUN *Fudan University*

WILDENAUER, NORA. *Fighting for nothing to happen*. DVD/PAL, 48 minutes, colour. London: The RAI, 2015. £50.00 (+VAT)

Fighting for nothing to happen is a subtle and atmospheric film highlighting delays to the relocation of internally displaced persons in the Sikka Regency of east Flores, Indonesia. Following the eruption of Mount Rokatenda, after which several villagers died, the traumatized inhabitants of the island of Pulau Palue were moved to a temporary shelter near the Flores town of Maumere. The film begins a year later, with the Palue 'refugees' still living in their shelter, and a government-funded relocation to the island of Pulau Besar yet to be implemented.

The documentary's central character is Father Cyrillus, a charming, bespectacled priest, often shown reading a book as he takes yet another boat crossing from Flores to Pulau Besar. Father Cyrillus is a representative of the Catholic NGO Caritas, and seems to be tasked with trying to co-ordinate the local branches of the Disaster and Forestry Agencies, as well as the offices of the village, district, and regency heads. As another Caritas member later remarks, when they work with the government, 'they drive us crazy'. Father Cyrillus wants the project to move forwards, but is frustrated by a lack of permits, funds, and political will.

Anyone acquainted with Flores, or with rural Indonesia more generally, will find much that is

familiar, as well as frustrating, in this film. As the refugees wait to be relocated, and the Pulau Besar inhabitants wait for the arrival of these unknown outsiders, Nora Wildenauer includes other images of waiting. Incessant rain pours down; men sit, drink coffee, and smoke cigarettes as they wait for instructions and wages; and bulldozers and other machinery slowly become immobilized by thick mud.

Meanwhile, as problems of corruption and inertia emerge, the viewer waits for the fighting of the film's title to begin. However, this being rural Indonesia, conflict rarely manifests itself in anger or harsh words. The nearest we come is when, as bulldozers are about to start work digging on Pulau Besar, the land's owner objects to the overly hasty organization of a ritual. Rebuking the workers, the village secretary, and Father Cyrillus, he reminds them that, though the owners are happy to donate the land, they must still be respected and informed of events. After Father Cyrillus apologizes, the ritual goes ahead, and the blood of sacrificed pigs is smeared on both the bulldozer and a large rock in the field. When, several days later, the bulldozer is immobilized by mud and a non-charging battery, the camera lingers on this rock, suggesting the displeasure of other, nonhuman, agents.

In general, what the film reveals is not fighting, but an avoidance of both conflict and the specificities of project details. When Wildenauer asks Sil Tibo, the head of the local Disaster Agency office, why he hasn't yet been to the relocation site on Pulau Besar, he replies that his staff can do that, and that he needs to stand by in the office. Quite what he is standing by for is not clear, but as it emerges that funds allocated for the project are missing, we suspect Sil Tibo might be standing by for money to line his own pockets. Later, when the serious and likeable village secretary visits Sil Tibo's office, he is treated to patronizing assurances that Sil Tibo will take responsibility for everything, that the workers will be paid soon, and that the project is for humanity. As he returns with Wildenauer to the car where Father Cyrillus is waiting, the two men joke that this is how Indonesia works.

The important questions raised by this documentary cannot be completely answered by this genre. Why has decentralization in Indonesia led to the stalling of so many development projects? What explains the reluctance to properly confront those in power? Why, on postcolonial Flores, does the Catholic Church still seem the most efficient and respected provider of local development? *Fighting for nothing to happen* would be a wonderful resource to stimulate

discussions in courses on the anthropology and sociology of development. It suggestively hints at the complexity of local government structures, social hierarchies, and connections between people and land. I found myself wanting to know more about the Palue refugees, as well as to hear the voices of ordinary villagers on Pulau Besar. However, the subtle (side)ways in which such villagers, particularly women, express cynicism and doubt are not easily captured by a short film. It is to Wildenauer's great credit that she has so impressively highlighted how, sometimes, all that can be hoped for from Indonesian government projects is . . . nothing.

CATHERINE ALLERTON *London School of Economics*

Religious conversion

AHMAD, ATIYA. *Everyday conversions: Islam, domestic work, and South Asian migrant women in Kuwait*. bibliogr., 270 pp. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2017. £20.99 (paper)

Why are South Asian domestic workers converting to Islam in the Gulf? This is the central question framing Attiya Ahmad's eloquent *Everyday conversions*, which received an honourable mention for the Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion. This beautifully written book, unburdened by heavy social theory (mostly relegated to brief footnotes), skilfully weaves together women's stories, which are contextualized within the history of the Indian Ocean trade, the feminization of Kuwait's labour market, and the Islamic revival movement. A significant addition to scholarship on foreign workers in the Gulf, Ahmad's volume adds ethnographic material that is missing from other studies: details of private religious lives.

'Everyday conversions' are not eventful, expected, dramatic, or coercive, nor are they radical breaks, departures, or rebirths. They are a gradual reworking of daily lives. Ahmad contrasts her argument, grounded in Kuwaiti private households, with two competing dominant explanations for conversion: liberal secularists underscore hierarchical relations between domestic workers and employers in the Gulf's *kafala* system of sponsorship and question the sincerity of conversion; Islamic reformists attribute them to successful outreach by Kuwait's *da'wa* movement. Yet everyday conversions are only partially about religion – the explicit focus of the book's final two chapters.

The story begins with the wider history of relations between South Asia and the Gulf, the

struggle to adapt to working in Kuwait and to find one's place in transnational liminality. Ahmad presents a variety of stories, ranging from accounts of women who used social networks to gain their position in households of wealthy Kuwaiti families who had employed their Indian families for generations, to those who enlisted the services of recruitment agencies. The book's second theme is that of the 'double displacement . . . of being situated and suspended between the lives of their "work" and "family" household members in South Asia and the Gulf' (p. 99). Ahmad even visits Nepal with her interlocutors (chap. 3), where she observes how women who have experienced life in Kuwait became distanced from customs and religious practices of their families and villages of origin. Having adapted to serving employers in their households, these women struggle with disparities in standards of living on return visits home. Some feel just as ostracized by their own families as they do in Kuwait. *Naram*, a Hindi/Urdu word meaning softness and pliability, is what is expected of proper South Asian women, and Ahmad carefully describes the skill it takes for unmarried domestic workers to be shaped by their surroundings and to seamlessly move across different sociopolitical contexts. Everyday conversion thus originates in being 'a part of yet apart from' (p. 79) both households, and is embedded in temporariness, suspension, and being *naram*, the respective titles of the first three chapters.

Chapter 4's theme is *housetalk*, or 'everyday Islamic conversions in terms of [domestic workers'] daily activities and intimate relationships within their households' (p. 127), where women become familiar with Islam through repetition of everyday work in the solitude of employers' homes. Chapter 5 focuses on *fitra*, 'a form of moral reasoning that guides people's actions, an innate, God-given capacity to distinguish right from wrong' (p. 180). Conversion to Islam, as Ahmad's story-telling illustrates, gave converts a renewed sense of dignity and purpose, but did not change their status, which remained cemented in transnational socioeconomic hierarchies. The *da'wa* movement's women's centre – with programmes that present Islam to non-Muslims – became a socially acceptable space for domestic workers to congregate during their free time, where they found support and belonging among women of similar ethnonational backgrounds.

A welcome addition to courses on migration, the Indian Ocean, Islamic studies, and women's studies, *Everyday conversions* generally depicts positive working relationships rather than cases of

human rights abuses, which Ahmad rightfully notes are heavily documented elsewhere. The book's rich ethnographic data are drawn from twenty-four case studies for which employers carefully vetted Ahmad before she was granted access to their live-in domestic workers. One must, however, ask how this narrative might differ if Ahmad had had access to the households of Kuwaitis less willing to accommodate her *naram*, yet unavoidably intrusive, presence, or to those less generous to their foreign workers. What if Ahmad interviewed Filipina or Ethiopian women instead of Indians and Nepalese? What if she focused on Shi'a households – which comprise 30-5 per cent of the population of Kuwaiti nationals – whose employees might be more inclined to attend other religious gatherings than those facilitated by the Sunni Islamic *da'wa* movement? Regardless of these questions, this is a highly recommended and very readable book on South Asian women's precarious and intimate lives, which are gradually reshaped by affective labour and Islamic ethical formation as experienced within Kuwaiti households.

MARA A. LEICHTMAN *Michigan State University*

INGE, ANABEL. *The making of a Salafi Muslim woman: paths to conversion*. xiv, 303 pp., tables, illus., bibliogr. Oxford: Univ. Press, 2017. £26.99 (cloth)

When is Islamic extremism not extremism? In this wonderfully lucid and scholarly ethnographic study of young Salafi women in London, many of them converts (or 'reverts'), and the majority Somalis, West Indians, or West Africans, Anabel Inge probes what has become a dominant question in British twenty-first-century public policy. Through closely observed, nuanced anthropological research over more than two years, contextualized within the literature on New Religious Movements and of other studies of radical Muslim groups, the author tries to understand what makes Salafism, a highly conservative, scripturalist form of Islam propagated in and from Saudi Arabia, attractive to the young women she studied, as well as to their male counterparts.

Salafis in Britain are a tiny minority clustered around mosques in Brixton and Birmingham, along with a few other London Islamic centres. During the 1990s, Salafism drew in large numbers of young Brixtonians, mostly of African or Caribbean descent, who converted to Islam. Among the women, only some came from Muslim backgrounds. They chose to adopt

Salafism because other Islamic meetings mainly talked politics while they were seeking an 'authentic', 'true' Islam which would explicate the fundamentals of the faith. Distinctively, the Saudi brand of Salafism dominant in Britain rejected jihad and advocated peaceful relations, although it also denounced democracy and practised strict societal separations, not only gendered but vis-à-vis most Muslims, who were defined as lapsed and inauthentic. Salafis claimed to be the 'saved' seventy-third sect, the only one able to reach the highest level of paradise, and a calculus of reward and punishment dominated everyday life for young Salafi women.

Given its conservative rigidity in the face of twenty-first-century permissiveness in the United Kingdom, these young women faced a series of everyday dilemmas, charted by Inge with commendable subtlety. For a start, Salafi women's circles, despite formally encouraging *da'wa* (calling others to the faith), were in fact rather unwelcoming and women who joined faced cold-shouldering, gossip, and intense criticism. Salafi preachers were rather dull, Inge admits, mainly citing authoritative texts and engaging in virtually none of the creative hermeneutical interpretation that Saba Mahmood found among leading Egyptian women preachers. All this encouraged women to rely on the Internet for information and advice, rather than socializing with fellow converts.

Another dilemma related to university education and professional choices, since gender mixing was strictly prohibited and women were expected to wear *niqabs* (full-face coverings), which most jobs in the modern sector disallow. Choices were limited to teaching, and many of the women the author knew gave up promising careers as accountants, lawyers, or scientific researchers in order to follow their faith. Somali and other African families had migrated to Britain to enable their children to go to university, gain degrees, and find professional work, so, not unsurprisingly, families disapproved of their daughters' choices.

Finally, the choice of a marriage partner was full of pitfalls: the prohibition on gender mixing meant that communicating with a prospective marriage candidate needed intermediaries who were often unavailable. Women sought educated young men with good career prospects, who were few in number, and most women preferred to marry men who did not want polygamous marriages, although Salafism allows these. There was also a very high divorce rate among Salafis, which meant marriage was risky. In the end,

many girls chose to marry their ex-boyfriends rather than marry a complete stranger. All these dilemmas meant a constant attrition in Salafi group membership, despite the continual addition of new members who joined after searching the 'religious supermarket' for an authentic, true Islam, beyond culture, tradition, or politics.

The making of a Salafi Muslim woman is in many ways a remarkable, innovative book which deserves a wide readership. It opens up a window on African Muslims, particularly Somalis, who both resemble and differ from the majority of British Muslims. Secondly, it establishes a yardstick for the spectrum of Islam in the United Kingdom, from moderate or spiritual Sufis and traditionalists who participate fully in British society; through so-called strict Deobandis and Wahhabis, who nevertheless recognize the major schools of *fiqh*, Islamic jurisprudence; to jihadi groups, aggressively denouncing the West. Salafi non-violent extremism is at the end of this spectrum. Initially supported by the UK government against the jihadists, Salafism has recently been redefined as 'extremist' despite its non-violence because Salafis oppose 'fundamental British values', even though they also support 'obedience to the law of the land'. All this may or may not lead, Inge concludes, to a more flexible, moderate form of future UK Salafism.

PNINA WEBBNER *Keele University*

THORNTON, BRENDAN JAMAL. *Negotiating respect: Pentecostalism, masculinity and the politics of spiritual authority in the Dominican Republic*. xiii, 272 pp., bibliogr. Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2016. £68.50 (cloth)

Brendan Jamal Thornton's *Negotiating respect* is an important contribution to the ethnographic literature on evangelical religion in the Dominican Republic – particularly its relationship to masculinity as it transforms male converts from lives as *tigueros* (macho men) to men of God, while also affirming existing hyper-masculine Dominican street culture. Thornton provides a much-needed examination of Christianity in the Dominican Republic by spotlighting how evangelical converts understand Pentecostalism, Dominican Vodú, and Catholicism as existing within the same, yet hierarchal, cultural and spiritual world.

Thornton's central question is how to understand evangelism's rise in the Dominican Republic, a country where Catholicism has been positioned at the heart of political and cultural identity for centuries. He deals with this query by

focusing on Pentecostal cultural politics of belief and the role an evangelical identity plays in poor urban communities like Villa Altagracia (Villa) – a *barrio* in San Cristobal province – where he has conducted fieldwork since 2007.

In seven thematic chapters plus an introduction and conclusion, Thornton delineates the fieldsite's historical and contemporary religious and cultural contexts, as well as providing rich and crucial data on the alternative Christianities that exist in Villa. Chapter by chapter, the book outlines Pentecostalism's vital influence in the *barrio's* politics of masculinity, respectability, community networks, and identity. The book's themes and analysis emerge from ethnographic data collected between 2007 and 2009, consisting of thirty-five semi-structured interviews with church members, multiple conversations with community members, and months of participant observation that included the method of 'deep hanging out' with interviewees.

Thornton begins his ethnography by exploring the religious journey of Mariela – a local woman – to evangelical conversion. Her story sketches the various social, economic, and health-related factors that influenced her transition from Catholicism, to being a practitioner of Dominican Vodú, to becoming a Pentecostal *crisiana*. Through this narrative, chapter 3 provides a strong foundation from which to understand 'the total universe, a coherent whole within which believers are differentially motivated but similarly governed by a shared vision of the supernatural and its assumptions' (p. 91). This explains why Dominicans like Mariela, particularly the marginalized/poor, can span the spectrum of practices from Vodú to Pentecostalism without rearranging their core spiritual beliefs.

The remaining chapters dive into the muddy waters of evangelicals' lived experience in their homes, the church, and neighbourhood. Thornton shows how both the Pentecostal spiritual practice of praising only Jesus Christ and its strict code of austerity have been deemed by the public as the epitome of Christian observation. Locals name Pentecostal followers as the Christians seated closest to God. What becomes clear throughout these chapters is that the performance of conversion and its validation by the community is a more important aspect of being and becoming Pentecostal than a thorough knowledge of Pentecostal theology. It is not enough that converts show change at home or in church; the outside community must declare the transformation in order for the conversion to have happened.

Pentecostalism's street credentials as producing true *crisianos* have carved out an enduring space in the religious and social landscape of the *barrio*. In *Negotiating respect*, this is skillfully described by parsing out the relationship between various youth gangs and the Pentecostal Church, thus constituting an analytical schism from the social science literature that portrays them as existing in opposing and separate social spaces. Thornton highlights the ways in which both the church and the street gangs operate as nations within a nation, wielding power locally, demanding loyalty, and setting a spiritual and political order respectfully. The book highlights the fact that the only way out of gang life is death or conversion to Pentecostalism. In this way, the youth gangs in the *barrio* are Pentecostalism's biggest sponsors, affirming its evangelical exceptionalism.

One of *Negotiating respect's* significant contributions is its focus on understanding religion in the Dominican Republic through human relationships. It fulfils well the anthropological mandate of listening to what people say, observing what they do, and then placing it within a larger sociocultural and political context. The book's strength, and its significance, within the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, and ethnic and religious studies lies in its analytical lens, which takes the reader outside of the church and into the streets through the stories of local converts, non-converts, and potential future converts. This ethnography theorizes that 'respectability' as an ideal forms multiple bridges between and within the *barrio's* physical, social, and discursive spaces. One understands how the local *colmado* (corner store) operates as a space for *tigueraje* and a breeding ground for *crisianos*. This is a much-needed ethnography that reorients cultural understandings of Christianity and Dominican culture in poor, marginalized, and discriminated communities.

YADIRA PEREZ HAZEL *University of Melbourne*

Theory, method, and ethics

BLANTON, RICHARD E. with LANE F. FARGHER. *How humans cooperate: confronting the challenges of collective action*. xi, 423 pp., tables, figs, illus., bibliogr. Boulder: Univ. Press of Colorado, 2016. £24.99 (paper)

Human beings co-operate more easily, more often, in more ways, and on much larger scales

than do members of other species. This has led in recent years to the rapid growth of research, including more than a few books, on human co-operation from a wide variety of perspectives. Fortunately, the breadth and diversity of the phenomenon of human co-operation means that virtually all of the biological, behavioural, and social sciences, including anthropology and archaeology, have something important to contribute to this endeavour.

How humans cooperate was written primarily by Richard E. Blanton, while Lane Fargher made contributions to four of its thirteen chapters. Arguing that anthropology has been 'the missing voice in the conversation about cooperation', this book is an attempt to use the 'anthropological imagination' (p. 52) to shed light on human co-operation. Among the book's more valuable contributions is a focus on marketplaces not simply as sites for competition but rather as the locations for large-scale co-operation that eventually led to major societal changes: '[I]t was in the marketplaces that people began to imagine the possibility of more egalitarian forms of social intercourse, and new ways to understand what it means to be human, that challenged social asymmetry' (p. 97). Also laudable is the authors' rethinking of the origins of the state in light of collective action theory, which appears primarily in the four central chapters co-authored by Fargher. The authors bring to bear a qualitative and quantitative database from thirty societies from around the world and throughout human history that should be of interest to scholars working on the origin of the state.

Notwithstanding the strengths of the central aspects of the book, Blanton's presentation of evolutionary approaches to co-operation is disappointing. Here he provides a rather simplistic version of something to which he refers at different times as the evolutionary psychological or biomathematical approach to co-operation. In so doing, he makes some errors that would have been easy to avoid. These include a conflation of kin selection with group selection, and the coining of a phrase I have never heard before: 'inclusive selection' (pp. 13-15). As near as I can tell, this is a sort of portmanteau of inclusive fitness and kin selection, and as such seems to reveal some lack of knowledge about the evolutionary approach. Additionally, Blanton claims that the hallmark of the biomathematical approach to human co-operation is a belief that, owing to a history of group selection, humans are innately altruistic. According to Blanton, this leads the biomathematicians to believe in 'altruistic ubiquity' (p. 285) and to dismiss the collective

action dilemma in which conflicting interests hinder co-operation. If altruism were actually ubiquitous among humans, then the collective action dilemma really would be an unnecessary distraction. Very few people who work on the evolution of human co-operation actually believe this. In fact the biomathematical approach is one that is taken by only a small minority of scholars using evolutionary theory to study co-operation. Most of us, including many whom Blanton cites elsewhere in the book, do not advocate altruistic ubiquity and are fascinated by the collective action dilemma and the challenges it presents to human co-operation. However, you would not know that from reading this book. There is no reason why Blanton had to package his central arguments within a critique of evolutionary approaches to co-operation. The otherwise excellent core elements of this book could have stood quite solidly on their own.

In sum, readers will find value in the portions of this volume that concern topics with which Blanton and Fargher are most familiar. Anyone looking for more, particularly an understanding of evolutionary approaches to human co-operation, should look at the many references *How humans cooperate* itself provides and take up the challenge to read more widely within the field.

LEE CRONK *Rutgers University*

HAINES, DAVID W. *An introduction to sociocultural anthropology: adaptations, structures, meanings* (second edition). xviii, 294 pp., figs, illus., bibliogr. Boulder: Univ. Press of Colorado, 2017. £24.99 (paper)

Those teaching courses in social and cultural anthropology at the introductory level, understood roughly as that of first-year undergraduate study, have a rich choice of textbooks from which to work. For those teaching the fundamentals of anthropology to audiences outside formal university-level courses – such as in pre-university and further education contexts in the United Kingdom, or community colleges in the United States – the choice is more limited. In both cases, teachers will mostly find that no single textbook fully meets the need. The second edition of David W. Haines's *An introduction to sociocultural anthropology* aims to fill the gap between the need for an overall teaching text of manageable length and one that exposes students to original ethnographic material in the form of monographs, films, or original field projects. It is also, while this is not explicitly claimed, well suited for use in the non-university or pre-university teaching of anthropology.

Haines is Professor Emeritus at George Mason University and has written on the anthropology of policy, refugees and migration, and kinship in Vietnam. As his title signals, the book organizes the content of sociocultural anthropology around three large meta-themes: environmental adaptation, structures of social relations, and the creation and manipulation of meanings. The history of the discipline, while not ignored, is largely confined to short discussions of Tylor, Morgan, Boas, Radcliffe-Brown, and Malinowski in the opening chapter, 'The anthropological vision'.

Within each meta-theme, parallel topics and core questions are in turn the basis for presenting the detailed case studies. For example, in the sections on 'Adaptation' and 'Structure', these topics address the variables of control, density, complexity, and mobility. Within 'Adaptation', the relations with the environment of foragers (hunter-gatherers), horticulturalists, agriculturalists, pastoralists, and industrialists are covered. 'Structures' encompasses kinship and household, descent and marriage, economics, politics, and religion. Under 'Meanings' are grouped cognition, language, expression, and action – including, under the latter, future-reaching comments on what the destiny of anthropology might be in the coming world order. Each chapter concludes with two case examples, many of which are drawn from contemporary life: a refreshing signal to the reader of anthropology's power to illuminate human experience in the here and now. Particularly telling examples are a comparative study of social media postings, and the experience of Syrian refugees in the United States and Canada following the crisis of 2015. Following each chapter, too, is an unusually detailed list of sources and helpful pointers to further reading. The material overall is clearly and accessibly presented, without any over-simplification of topics that can sometimes be relatively impenetrable to the beginning student. For instance, the author's exposition of the fundamentals of kinship theory is the most readily comprehensible I have encountered since Robin Fox's *Kinship and marriage* (1967).

On the other hand, this textbook is designed uncompromisingly for a primarily US undergraduate market: at numerous points, the wording and context make clear that the reader being addressed is a North American one. This gives the work a slightly parochial feel for users outside the North American hegemony, and obscures the diversity of approaches in sociocultural anthropology globally. This point made, however, Haines's cases are drawn from

present-day societal concerns – such as controversies over same-sex marriage – and demonstrate on a broader front how classic models and ethnographic insights can encompass contemporary issues. As would be expected from Haines's own range of interests, the relationship of anthropology to public policy is strongly brought out in these examples.

There is a lucidity to the book's tripartite design that is appealing in its own right, presentationally neat, and teacher-friendly for its intended purpose. This rationality, however, has a price attached. At one level, as in any classification scheme, this one creates its own anomalies. Thus it is unclear why religion is placed under 'Structures' rather than 'Meanings', where arguably it could equally belong. At another level, the design's effect is to present anthropological knowledge in a curiously ahistorical and 'flat' manner: one that barely makes visible the twists and turns of thought, or the controversies and key figures, that have constituted anthropology's past and brought the world's 'anthropologies' to where they sit today.

An introduction to sociocultural anthropology is unquestionably a valuable addition to the teaching toolkit, albeit one that – as the author may well agree – will serve at its best when used in conjunction with other approaches that have been used in explicating sociocultural anthropology at an introductory level.

HILARY CALLAN *Royal Anthropological Institute*

HOLBRAAD, MARTIN & MORTEN AXEL PEDERSEN.

The ontological turn: an anthropological exposition. xiii, 339 pp., bibliogr. Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2017. £54.99 (cloth)

As someone who has published criticisms of ontologically inclined anthropology, I assumed I would dislike this book. Rarely have I been so pleasantly surprised. In *The ontological turn*, Martin Holbraad and Morten Axel Pedersen present their understanding of the ontological turn, the scholars who built its foundations, and the ways in which the perspectives of anthropologists both supportive of and opposed to the theoretical movement differ from their own. They accomplish the task with clear, compelling, and measured prose, and they make a welcome effort to leave space for other forms of anthropological thought.

Holbraad and Pedersen lay out the three methodological ingredients of any ontological investigation: reflexivity, conceptualization, and

experimentation. Using these terms, they define the ontological turn as a means of 'transmuting ethnographic exposures reflexively into forms of conceptual creativity and experimentation' (p. 297). They trace the emergence of the turn to three anthropologists, each of whom receives a chapter-length treatment: Roy Wagner, with his concepts of invention and obviation; Marilyn Strathern, with her concepts of the relational, comparison, and postplural abstraction; and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, with his concepts of perspectivism, multinaturalism, and controlled equivocation. The overviews of these authors are superb. Although as an Amazonianist I was already familiar with Viveiros de Castro's work, Holbraad and Pedersen succeeded in introducing me to, and convincing me of, Wagner's profound contributions. They left me slightly confused regarding Strathern, but they also helped me understand why that might be the case. For example, her intentional production of 'hesitation' means that her insights are not easy to communicate in intuitively graspable terms.

Apart from the introduction, the most useful chapters for many readers will be the first, 'Other ontological turns', in which Holbraad and Pedersen differentiate their approach from ontological projects inside and outside the discipline – and the conclusion, which they begin by describing the postmodern 'gloom' that both phenomenological and ontological anthropology sought to expel from the discipline. As a phenomenologically orientated anthropologist, I found their emphasis on the role of conceptualization to be a useful way to differentiate my own analytic approach from an ontological one. Additionally, Holbraad and Pedersen detect ontological currents in a wide array of anthropological works, arguing that many anthropologists began doing ontologically inspired studies well before the word became a touchstone in professional discourse.

Holbraad and Pedersen's generous and even-handed style of introducing their position invites an equally generous mode of evaluating its potentials for one's own ethnographic practice. They work to improve the ontological approach by acknowledging and incorporating the insights of their critics. Despite their concessions, they stick to their guns and explain why the ontological turn holds so much promise for anthropology.

Although most of their arguments are compelling, Holbraad and Pedersen do not succeed entirely in convincing the reader that the

risks of the ontological turn are easily avoided. By basing their reflexive, conceptual experimentation on moments of 'ethnographic contingency', they will leave some critics doubtful as to the ultimate empirical grounding of the approach. Moments of experimentation can arise from any ethnographic encounter, the authors tell us, no matter what import the relevant conceptual springboards have for the people with whom anthropologists work. In addition, no matter how precise many ontologically inclined anthropologists are with regard to the experimental nature of their thinking, the concepts they propose can achieve an overly concrete status in academic debates. Even if Viveiros de Castro might not agree that perspectivism is an essential attribute of all indigenous Amazonian ways of thinking/seeing/being, scores of graduate students and professors argue otherwise. It has become difficult, if not impossible, to convince peers to think beyond such broad conceptual models when contemplating the particularities of their material.

Misgivings aside, *The ontological turn* is a major work and a model for how to introduce an intervention such that both critics and supporters can appreciate it. In the right classroom setting, undergraduate students will be able to learn the book's lessons. However, it is best suited for anthropologists at the doctoral level and beyond, who have the ethnographic experience that will allow them to try out the forms of thinking that Holbraad and Pedersen propose. No matter what the reader's methodological or theoretical assumptions, the book will stretch the imagination of anyone who gives it the time and effort it deserves.

MICHAEL CEPEK *University of Texas at San Antonio*

HORVATH, AGNES, BJØRN THOMASSEN & HARALD WYDRA (eds). *Breaking boundaries: varieties of liminality*. vi, 255 pp., illus., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. £92.00 (cloth)

In *Breaking boundaries'* twelve chapters, organized in three parts, editors Agnes Horvath, Bjørn Thomassen, and Harald Wydra, as well as a series of prestigious contributors, intend to explore the analytical utility of 'liminality' in order to understand complex sociocultural phenomena, especially those defined as 'political'. Their position is founded on political science's lack of ability to understand political and social transformations in the contemporary world. Many

chapters are case studies of crises, breakdowns, or revolutionary processes seen as liminal moments, transitions between a world that collapses and another that emerges. The book includes analyses of: the symbolic implications of the execution of Louis XVI (1793) during the French Revolution by Camil Roman (chap. 8); the difficulties in closing social crises such as the 2011 Egyptian revolution by Mark Peterson (chap. 9); and the geopolitical consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the new post-Cold War order by Richard Sakwa (chap. 11).

Other chapters use the term 'liminality' more flexibly, less attached to Victor Turner, such as Stephen Mennell's very interesting chapter 6 on the perception of the expansion of the US borders towards the West during the nineteenth century as a kind of rite of passage from 'barbarism' (indigenous peoples, Mexicans) to 'civilization' (Anglo-Saxon Whites), and its transformation into a justification of US imperialism in the twentieth century. Also notable is Peter Burke's chapter 7 on the construction of Louis XIV's political leadership through everyday rituals in Versailles (in truth, a study of ritual from a Goffmanian perspective).

On the other hand, Agnes Horvath's chapter 4 should be considered separately, because of its subject and approach. Through a peculiar, and at the same time suggestive, analysis, she claims that metallurgy has been a model that inspired the ways of conceiving identity changes, especially in rites of passage. I should also consider Harald Wydra's chapter 10 independently; his discussion on the paradoxes of democracy (the promise of emancipation versus democratic order, or the vacuum of power versus authority) is more in line with some debates in political science. Finally, chapters 1-3, 5, and 12 (written by Arpad Szakolczai, Bjørn Thomassen, Bernhard Giesen, Michel Dobry, and Maria Malksoo, respectively) deal with issues such as the genealogy of the concept of liminality; its elaboration in anthropology; and, especially in relation to Turner, its limits and possibilities for political science; its application to new fields such as international relations; and the importance of apprehending the constitutive ambiguity of social situations, and so on.

The editors and a number of contributors assert that anthropological concepts and approaches in general will benefit political science, since that discipline can grasp the cultural dimensions of political phenomena – although we must not reduce anthropology to the study of culture. Anthropology gives special relevance to symbolic and cognitive aspects, feelings or emotions, all considered irrational, residual, and

irrelevant by the more dominant, normative, and teleological field of political science. In the specific case of the notion of liminality, the authors argue that it must be expanded beyond the confines of the anthropological study of small-scale societies.

There are two issues that I think are important to clarify. The influence of anthropology on other disciplines is not a recent phenomenon: it suffices to recall the French, Italian, and British historiography of the twentieth century's second half (E.P. Thompson, Carlo Ginzburg, Robert Darnton, Jacques Le Goff, Philippe Ariès, Georges Duby, the aforementioned Peter Burke, etc.). Moreover, anthropology has long been dedicated to studying complex large-scale societies. Turner himself applied his approach to the analysis of England in the twelfth, Mexico in the nineteenth, and Brazil in the twentieth century. The interest in using Turner's concepts and approaches to analyse sociopolitical phenomena in the so-called 'Western' world has significant antecedents (e.g. J.C. Alexander, B. Giesen & J.L. Mast, eds, *Social performance*, 2006). Perhaps this volume's novelty lies in a fruitful dialogue between liminality and the problems and approaches of political science. It is true that anthropologists may contend that the model of social drama must be read in its historical context (think of Turner's discussions of static analytical models). It is also true that the Turnerian perspective on symbolism, ritual, and religion has been profusely discussed in the last fifty years. Anthropologists may think that references to these debates are fundamental. However, *Breaking boundaries* is valuable for both its content and the expectation that the hegemonic conceptions of politics might be modified.

SERGIO E. VISACOVSKY *Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (IDES/CONICET)*

JACKSON, MICHAEL. *How lifeworlds work: emotionality, sociality and the ambiguity of being*. xvi, 241 pp., illus., bibliogr. Chicago: Univ. Press, 2017. £19.00 (paper)

How lifeworlds work weaves together reflections and ethnographic examples gathered over more than forty years of research and writing. The first words of the preface reaffirm a theme that has consistently informed Michael Jackson's style of existential anthropology: 'Existential commonalities and continuities justify our speaking of the human condition, and warrant a conception of ethnography as a method of displacing ourselves from our own lifeworlds in order to consider our humanity from the

standpoint of seemingly alien perspectives and worldviews' (p. ix). This understanding was explored in his two previous books, *Existential anthropology* (2005) and *Lifeworlds* (2012). The new book's distinctive focus is on the question of how people deal with the tension between emotional compulsions and social imperatives.

Even in the most rigidly rule-bound societies, individuals do not simply internalize collective ideals: they experience them in different ways and sometimes their inner emotional urges push against accepted social norms. When a society is too rigidly rule-bound, rebellion breaks out. When it is too lax, disorder prevails. There is 'a perpetual process of cybernetic adjustment between affect and order' (p. xv). Emotional compulsions and social imperatives condition each other through a constant renegotiation of the rules. In places, Jackson's exposition of this theme risks looking a bit too binary, the model a bit too homeostatic: is there really a continual oscillation between inner emotional urges and outer socially agreed norms, and is it even possible to draw such a clear distinction between them? However, as Jackson develops the theme, refracting it through a multiplicity of engagingly presented ethnographic instances, he draws attention to the complexity and subtlety of the relations between affect and order, their mutual entanglement and continual unfolding over the course of a person's life.

This book does not present a sustained new ethnography; nor is it structured as a linear theoretical argument. Rather, it weaves together vignettes from past fieldwork, examples from classic ethnographies, insights picked from a huge range of literature in phenomenology, psychology, and philosophy, as well as anthropology, and all with a poet's sensibility. It is structured as a diptych: the first half of the book revolving around ritualized forms of redressive action, the second around the intersubjective dynamics of kinship. Within each big panel there is a succession of mostly quite brief headed sections – not chapters – each shining a light on the central theme from a different angle.

There are many vivid narratives of events or people's predicaments, drawn mainly from Jackson's long-standing relationship with the Kuranko people in Sierra Leone, where he began fieldwork in the 1960s, but also from his research in Australia and New Zealand; his meetings with African migrants in Europe; his correspondence with an NGO during the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone; and his own creative writing: in other words, from his own life lived in dialogue with people of other cultures. He does not avert his gaze from horror, cruelty, and extreme inequality,

and indeed what he is trying to understand, and co-feel, is how people continue to build meaningful lives even in situations of trauma and suffering.

Jackson's existential anthropology has always been illuminated by his imaginative and emotional investment in fictional narrative and other verbal arts, both as a writer and as a listening participant. Kuranko tales – the subject of his masterpiece, *Allegories of the wilderness* (1982) – crop up with increasing insistence in the book's second half as evidence of the imaginative inner life of kinship relations, allowing people to postulate inversions of norms, taboo-breaking, and boundary-crossing. He treats these stories not as the subject matter of a distinct sub-discipline with its own procedures and assumptions (folklore, oral literature) but as an essential part of everyday experience – and one of the modes through which, in small-scale societies strongly governed by collective rules, individuals can give scope to emotions at variance with those rules. Such emotions come out 'in cries and whispers, in private thoughts, in stories told at night when quotidian conventions are in abeyance, and in fantasy and dream' (p. 154).

Jackson's many admirers have noted how consistent his life's work has been, how his constant open-ended dialogic exploration – never seeking to have the last word, but always opening up fresh conversations – has sustained over the years a rare moral coherence. Moreover, his concerns have so often refigured anthropological positions that only became mainstream years, or even decades, later. Key among these is his evocation of an anthropology that arises from living and being *with* others, and discovering what we have in common through experiencing difference.

KARIN BARBER *University of Birmingham/London School of Economics*

JOSEPHIDES, LISETTE & ANNE SIGFRID GRØNSETH (eds). *The ethics of knowledge creation: transactions, relations and persons*. 264 pp., table, figs, bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. £85.00 (cloth)

The ethics of knowledge creation, edited by Lisette Josephides and Anne Sigfrid Grønseth, is the newest addition to Berghahn's 'Methodology and history in anthropology' series. There are some superb contributions in this volume's eight chapters. For example, Giovanna Bacchiddu's chapter 2, 'The danger of knowledge', elegantly combines field experiences from two very different locations in order to examine how an

anthropologist's dangerously intimate knowledge can disrupt people's attempts to manage difference and negotiate sameness. She provides both a lyrical exploration of the experiences of adopted Sardinian children (of Chilean origin), and an astute examination of how relations in this field were altered by her own position as a researcher with a long-term familiarity with Chile. Tamara Kohn's contribution (chap. 3) – well written and clearly structured – draws upon extensive experience conducting ethnography over a number of decades in various locations, and uses this experience to reflect upon her own involvement in an institutional Ethics Review Board. In addition to being compulsive reading for anybody who has had experiences with such a body, Kohn's conclusions are theoretically penetrating in their understanding of both ethics and knowledge as relational.

Chapters 4 (by Laura Huttunen) and 5 (by Tamsin Bradley) are curated under the banner of 'indirect mediated ethnography', and give examples of knowledge production methods that will be both thought-provoking and testing for many anthropologists. Huttunen describes being an invited observer to the therapy sessions of a Bosnian refugee, which she compares to truth commissions as forms of ethical knowledge production. Bradley, meanwhile, explores the ethical anxieties produced among local ethnographic researchers through their employment in a transnational, UK government-funded development project. Chapter 6 by Kaja Finkler serves as a fine introduction for non-specialist anthropologists to the question of how commercialized DNA testing (exemplified by companies such as 23andMe) is producing novel forms of self-knowledge, new ways of relating to kin, and reinvigorated notions of authenticity and belonging. Meanwhile, Marit Melhuus's chapter 7 is a fascinating exploration of the legal regulation of biological knowledge in Norway, and shows how some kinds of biological knowledge (e.g. in cases of sperm donation) are guided by an ethical concern for the agentive individual, whereas other types of knowledge (specifically 'early ultrasound') are legislated against out of ethical concerns for 'society'.

The merits of these individual chapters will be clear to readers with specific theoretical and area interests, although in the context of the broader volume, their articulation with one another is not always well defined. At issue is the fact that the volume is effectively split between two quite different modes of inquiry. The first five chapters, while deeply engaged with developments within the anthropology of ethics, are nonetheless

contributions to much older debates about anthropological fieldwork. Their concern is anthropological knowledge. For the most part they consider this to be relational in that it is inalienable from the relations that produced it, and ethical insofar as those relations are ones which place demands of obligation, reciprocity, and responsibility upon the ethnographer. Contrastingly, in the volume's second half, there is a focus upon legislative and political questions about the regulation of biological knowledge. I really enjoyed engaging with these two diverse fields of inquiry, but found myself wondering why they had been collated in a single volume.

A question thus remains as to how the methodological questions raised in the first few chapters push anthropological debates beyond their current state, and how the juxtaposition of these questions with concerns about bioethics illuminate both. Furthermore, it might be asked if 'knowledge' was necessarily the most productive framing device for all the chapters. For example, the ethical practice that Huttunen's (chap. 4) Bosnian interlocutor seemed to be demanding of her was not just the production of knowledge, but also the act of witnessing – an act which she curiously sidestepped by anonymizing names that he very clearly wanted others to know. Likewise, it struck me that knowledge of the self in Finkler's chapter was only a much smaller aspect of the formation of new kinds of ethical subjectivity.

Marilyn Strathern's afterword helps to give these disparate chapters a post-factual coherence, as she finds a unifying rationale for the volume in Josephides' chapter 8: the idea that knowledge is an attribute of *knowing* persons. This is, of course, an idea borrowed from Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison's *Objectivity* (2010), but the chapters in this volume shed new and interesting light upon it.

NICHOLAS H.A. EVANS *London School of Economics*

LIN, KA & PETER HERRMANN (eds). *Social quality theory: a new perspective on social development*. viii, 206 pp., tables, figs, bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. £28.00 (paper)

Social quality theory emerged in the late 1990s in Europe as an attempt by social scientists to assess the progress of human societies in a way that transcends the purely economic. Ka Lin and Peter Herrmann's edited volume examines the theoretical premises of social quality theory, and attempts to apply it to societies beyond Western Europe. Anthropologists have apparently been largely uninvolved in this theorizing – the volume

editors and authors of the book's chapters seem to have no link to the discipline.

The introduction gives a good summation of social quality theory, pointing out how it arose against the Washington Consensus of neoliberalism to argue that economic growth alone is insufficient to measure the social progress of society, and that individualist interpretations of society also fall short, while considering the social and societal as essential. The book's first chapter by Anne Fairweather, Borut Roncevic, Maj Rydbjerg, Marie Valentova, and Mojca Zajc analyses the four components of social quality theory: 'socio-economic security, social inclusion, social cohesion, and empowerment' (p. 16), with substantial theoretical discussion of what each of these terms means and how they are interconnected. However, neither this chapter nor any other examines the specific data sets by which these components are actually measured. Jumping ahead, Lin's chapter 4 formulates the meaning of the European Union not just in economic but also in social terms, in ways that may apply not only to Western European societies but also to East Asian societies. The chapter is equivocal in its judgement as to the extent to which social quality theory may ultimately be applicable beyond Western Europe. Chapter 5 by Herrmann deals with a report issued by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress – written by Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and J.P. Fitoussi – revealing its socially liberal, but entirely quantitative, basis. This chapter includes as a cautionary note a sign purportedly on Albert Einstein's wall: 'Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts' (p. 82). Sue Hacking's chapter 7 deals with social quality in the United Kingdom, giving much useful societal detail; while chapter 8 by Göran and Sonia Therborn claims that 'Swedish society "is the most trusting in the world"' by recent statistical measures. Yet, on a different note, 'in any average week in 2000, 15 percent of employed men and 24 percent of women were absent for the whole week' (p. 136). Vyacheslav Bobkov, Olesya Veredyuk, and Ulvi Aliyev's chapter 10 discusses Russia in a similarly detailed way.

I do not review chapters in sequence and in depth because it is unclear how much anthropologists may be interested in this kind of analysis, based on strictly quantitative measures, relied upon partly because this is what is most convincing to policy-makers. A key question this book raises for me is this: should anthropologists be involved in efforts to measure progress by a

common set of parameters? In a globalized world in which cultural relativism in anthropology increasingly gives way to common ethical judgements, the answer, I think, can be 'yes'. As witnessed by recent books in anthropology on topics such as human rights and human well-being, anthropologists have something to say about how to construct human societies created both for optimal well-being and for 'progress'. How exactly they can be involved in this effort is more difficult to understand.

Of course, anthropologists should be urging social scientists and policy-makers everywhere to understand the importance of ethnography, but how those who believe that statistical measures are the only reality can be convinced that ethnography has something important to offer remains an open question. Like subjective well-being, social quality can be fully understood not only through statistical data, but also by having teams of ethnographers interview a representative sample of people in great depth about their lives in different societies. However, while we may believe this to be the case, how are we to persuade economists and policy-makers of this? This is one of anthropology's great challenges going into the future.

This book will not be directly useful to most anthropologists, except, perhaps, for those engaged in research on the societies profiled in some of the book's chapters. More indirectly, however, it may be quite useful to those pondering anthropology's future in a world in which that which can be counted may indeed be seen as all that counts.

GORDON MATHEWS *The Chinese University of Hong Kong*

REYNA, STEPHEN P. *Starry nights: critical structural realism in anthropology*. x, 210 pp., bibliogr. Oxford, New York: Berghahn Books, 2017. £21.00 (paper)

Stephen P. Reyna is currently a research associate at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany and the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences Humaines, Aix-en-Provence, in France. He is well known for his extensive study of neurology at Max Planck and his attempt to synthesize Dilthey's hermeneutics and neuroscience into what he calls 'cultural neurohermeneutics'. More recently, he has turned to topics in political economy, including the study of 'global warring theory' (p. 168). All of these subjects are addressed in Reyna's comprehensive theoretical treatise *Starry nights*. His main aim is to present critical structural

realism (CSR) as a theoretical alternative for anthropologists interested in a large universalizing approach to topics ranging from micro-neural networks to macro-global political economy.

Reyna's introduction presents the methods and assumptions of CSR, based on participant observation and a four-field anthropological perspective along with a scientific realist and materialist approach to epistemology and ontology. He does mention the limitations and potential glitches of CSR, but emphasizes that the approach is aimed at establishing approximate rather than absolute or final truths.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into three parts devoted to epistemology, ontology, and critical science. Chapters 1 and 2 focus on epistemology, assessing the arguments and assumptions of literary-hermeneutic and postmodern anthropologists, and post-positivist philosophers who have proposed relativistic conceptions of science. In nuanced critiques of these arguments, Reyna concludes that their claims entail neither the repudiation of rigorous scientific practice nor the validation of facts, objectivity, and approximate truths.

In chapter 3, Reyna proposes to replace Hegelian dialectics, which he labels a fuzzy teleological 'ghost story', with an ontology of structure, force, and power that draws on Hobbes, Hume, Nietzsche, and Althusser. He introduces the terms E-space – referring to social forms, practices, institutions, systems, and social beings external to actors – and I-space – which is internal, including the nervous system. Importantly, Reyna argues that the brain makes interpretations and employs a hermeneutic based on externalities such as culture, ideology, world-view, and public *délires* stored in neural networks. He argues that public *délires* are imposed by powerful elites through their hegemonic policies, programmes, laws, fatwas, or administrative and imperial orders.

In the book's last section, on critical science, Reyna discusses the significance of CSR. Chapter 4, 'Right and might', is a thorough investigation of the Indonesian coup of 1965-6 and its tragic consequences. The partial aim of this chapter is to critique Geertz's representation of the tragedy in his book *After the fact* (1995). The larger objective of the chapter is to offer an indictment of the hermeneutic-postmodern political, moral, and ethical standpoints.

Chapter 5 criticizes Kant's vision in *Perpetual peace* that democracies will inevitably promote peace. Reyna contests this view with details of twenty-four cases in which the American 'empire'

has, since the Second World War, engendered indirect and direct, covert and overt 'global warring' to develop neo-colonies or client states to control and extract resources (primarily oil) and to contain terrorism. Eschewing an economic deterministic framework, he utilizes an Althusserian neo-structural Marxist dialectical schematic, which contends that these imperial strategies create both political and economic contradictions that result in both productive and reproductive vulnerabilities, including ecological devastation and increases in global warfare.

Reyna does have an engaging style of writing and a sound grasp of both classic and contemporary epistemological and ontological issues in his critiques of postmodern anthropologists and post-positivist philosophers. However, he relies on a peculiar interpretation of Foucault's views on scientific and moral causality. He argues that Foucault distinguished between 'science itself' and 'regimes of scientific truth'. This Foucauldian epistemological toe dance has been subjected to an enormous amount of criticism, including that of Habermas, Bourdieu, and Chomsky. If Foucauldian truth is intertwined in a circular relation with systems of totalizing power or authority, how can there be any knowledge produced by 'science itself'?

After a discussion of Mao's essay 'On contradiction' and the current traumatic consequences of climate change, Reyna writes: 'Time to organize a revolution' (p. 126). He does not make it clear if he means a violent revolution or one through the ballot box. If it is the former, one can only respond by quoting the late Christopher Hitchens's title of his review of books about Che Guevara: 'Goodbye to all that' (*The New York Review of Books*, 17 July 1997).

Despite these reservations, *Starry nights* is Reyna's grand attempt to develop a thoroughly holistic and galactic model that will supplement the theoretical architecture of anthropologists as they explore the modern world and should be required reading in any graduate-level theory course in anthropology.

RAYMOND SCUPIN *Lindenwood University*

TRNKA, RADEK & RADMILA LORENCOVÁ. *Quantum anthropology: man, cultures, and groups in a quantum perspective*. 191 pp., figs, illus., bibliogr. Prague: Charles University, Karolinum Press, 2016. £15.00 (paper)

The traditional scientific world-view based on Newton's legacy is challenged by the problem of how to understand the quantum basis of our

reality. *Quantum anthropology* ambitiously offers an anthropological perspective on this issue, attempting to apply one of the most influential paradigms of scientific knowledge to the study of humankind. The authors have set themselves the difficult goal of using quantum theory to bridge the gap between the traditional materialistic definition of the world and a human realm that is permeated by social phenomena and cultural influences, which are located in a space-time characterized by uncertainty, non-locality, and probability.

The authors seek to follow and further develop a growing theoretical trend in anthropology inspired by the quantum perspective, especially with reference to the work of Karen Barad (*Meeting the universe halfway*, 2007) and Alexander Wendt (*Quantum mind and social science*, 2015). In their introduction, Radek Trnka and Radmila Lorencová pose various questions. How could the research of micro-particles contribute in any way to anthropology? How are the findings of quantum mechanics related to contemporary anthropological issues? Why is it important to take into account the current findings of quantum research for the future development of anthropology? The monograph's first part then presents the basic justifications for adopting quantum anthropological perspectives. The authors suggest that in anthropological discourse, postmodern, applied, and relativistic logic has resulted in the attitude that 'nothing in anthropology can possibly be exactly defined' (p. 16), which has put subjectivity, individual perspectives, and intersubjective discourse on a pedestal. The parallels between quantum and anthropological thought thus can be connected to the ontological turn in sociocultural anthropology.

In chapter 2, the basic definitions of empirical and non-empirical reality are introduced, which also constitute the foundations of quantum anthropological thought. Here, the authors attempt to show the reader the differences between the realms of potentiality and actuality, and the alterity that results in the world due to this dichotomy. Images and schemes illustrating the interactions between mind and consciousness in the quantum space-time help us to understand this shift from the real to the imaginary. Trnka and Lorencová further focus on human perception and the nature of observation in anthropological research. Some implications of the observer effect are shown in chapter 3, supported from the position of phenomenological philosophy, despite the fact that this book is not inspired by phenomenology per se.

Chapter 4 directs our attention to the origins of humanity and culture. The authors compare the closeness of Trnka's previous concept of 'overall, wave-particle energy-information potential' (p. 50) with those hypotheses of quantum theorists that are directed towards the underlying idea of a quantum sea. Chapter 5 deals with understanding sociocultural reality with the help of quantum theory. The body and emotions serve as the basic examples for the quantum explanation of collective consciousness and unconscious in chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 9 serves as a thematic shift in the book, dealing with the phenomenon of collapsing cultures and social groups. The authors propose that this occurs in accordance with the spiral model of collapsing cultures inspired by Bhattacharya's model of the behaviour of collective systems. The origin, spreading, and collapsing of waves is applied to an explanation of language, as well as to general linguistic systems, such as, for instance, myths. Trnka and Lorencová argue 'that emergence of meaning in communication shares some similarities with the probabilistic logic of quantum theory, more specifically, with the theory of superposition' (p. 118). In chapters 10, 11, and 12, the lines of thought of quantum anthropology are applied to the ethnographic findings of both authors. Their research primarily falls within the category of the anthropology of rituals, and it is used here to illuminate their purpose. The authors suggest that the participants in a ritual share thoughts, emotions, and collective identity through an entanglement – a concept inspired by quantum theory.

As is mentioned in *Quantum anthropology's* concluding chapters, Trnka and Lorencová do not aim to provide a comprehensive definition of all of the principles of quantum anthropology; the book, rather, is meant to serve as a contribution to the current discussion of the form/s of quantum anthropology. This is a relatively new perspective that requires more exploration through ethnographic examples – definitely more than two anthropologists can provide from their own research. However, the need to reflect on anthropological discoveries through the dimensions of quantum space-time is a legitimate one. I recommend this book for ritual and emotion transmission researchers as well as students of psychological anthropology.

IVAN MURIN *Matej Bel University*

TRNKA, SUSANNA & CATHERINE TRUNDLE (eds).
Competing responsibilities: the ethics and politics

of contemporary life. 273 pp., illus., bibliogr.
Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2017.
£18.99 (paper)

Competing responsibilities builds on the centrality of 'responsibilization' in neoliberal technologies of governance, exemplified by calls for citizens to take responsibility for their health during their working lives and living standards in retirement, while calling on us to look beyond neoliberalism. Taking a broader look at the ways responsibility can be deployed politically in contemporary social life, the essays explore what happens when globalized models of good governance and good citizenship encounter other, historically and culturally embedded, ideas about self-cultivation, mutual responsibility, sociality and the construction of personhood, the proper role of states, and relations between the self, the state, and other kinds of communities and collectivities. As Susanna Trnka and Catherine Trundle point out in their introduction, even if such alternative ideologies and practices are not necessarily incompatible with neoliberalism, analyses that include them suggest alternatives to a neoliberal iron cage.

The synergies between chapters are enhanced by being grouped into thematic sections. In the first chapter, Nikolas Rose and Filippa Lentzos argue that the 'ethic of responsibility', embedded in current concerns about 'resilience' in the face of uncertainty, is simply another top-down inculcation of individualism. They point to how resilience can exist in networks of collective self-help and co-operation between families and communities, particularly evident when states fail to aid the victims of disasters or protect their citizens from the everyday violence of armed actors. Despite some erosion of the resilience associated with low-level social bonds in neoliberalized market societies, the case that they can still underpin demands to be governed differently is convincing. Jarrett Zigon's chapter underscores that point by showing how Vancouver offers an alternative to the biopolitical therapeutic regime of harm-reduction strategies targeting individual drug users by creating an attuned local social world in which they can dwell, building new selves and new relationships.

In chapter 3, Trnka provides a historically contextualized account of how residents of Ostrava, in the Czech Republic, respond to the respiratory illnesses produced by pollution from the local steelworks. Although its current owner, ArcelorMittal, has a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, workers'

experiences in this postsocialist context focus the politics of responsibilization on the state. Jessica Smith (chap. 5) discusses the relationships between state regulation and responsibilities assumed by mining companies by comparing CSR with the newer Creating Shared Value (CSV) paradigm, including conversations with practitioners in an analysis that explores tensions between corporate efforts to responsibilize communities and communities' efforts to make corporations more accountable. Cris Shore (chap. 4) focuses on the new public management paradigm and audit culture. Justifiably insisting that the resilience of neoliberal ideas needs explaining, Shore finds it in the extension of an assemblage of market-orientated performance indicators combined with managerial control.

In the first of two chapters focused on the responsibility for violence, Elizabeth Anne Davis (chap. 6) examines the cross-community Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) in Cyprus, whose forensic teams identify human remains, return them to their relatives, and offer counselling services, but offer no findings about the cause of the deaths or who was responsible for them. Davis shows that the CMP's claim to be conducting a purely humanitarian, non-political operation leaves relatives unsatisfied, encouraging models of the state and power relations focused on secrecy and duplicity. Yet she notes that the alternative provided by Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) might also have proved unsatisfying. This is an issue taken forward by Rosalind Shaw in chapter 7 on Sierra Leone, which served as a laboratory for testing, combining the TRC process with criminal trials of individual perpetrators in a Special Court. The United Nations proclaimed the experiment a success, but through close ethnographic exploration of how these institutions functioned in practice in a context of post-conflict 'lawfare', Shaw offers a convincing case against this assessment.

A final section addresses intimate ties. Barry Adam's chapter 8 looks at the politics of responsibilization at different stages of the HIV endemic, focusing principally on the United States, recalling its early homophobic and racist dimensions before moving on to discuss the contradictions of individual responsibilization. Jessica Robbins-Ruszkowski (chap. 9) explores reconfigured local idioms of responsibility, care, and sociality in Poland's Universities of the Third Age, beneficiaries of expatriate funding for strengthening civil society. Catherine Trundle (chap. 10) closes by exploring how some veterans who suffered genetic damage as a result of exposure to radiation in British nuclear tests

responded to scientific evidence that irradiated cells could affect non-irradiated cells by asking whether they might have been responsible for the multiple sclerosis of their wives. This insightful collection will provide food for thought for both researchers and advanced students.

JOHN GLEDHILL *University of Manchester*

TURNER, NANCY J. *Ancient pathways, ancestral knowledge: ethnobotany and ecological wisdom of indigenous peoples of northwestern North America*. 2 vols. xxxvii, 554 pp.; xv, 552 pp., maps, tables, illus., bibliogr. Ithaca, N.Y., Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2014. £96.00 (cloth)

Ancient pathways, ancestral knowledge's two volumes summarize Nancy Turner's long and productive career documenting and exploring indigenous ethnobotanical and ethnoecological knowledge in one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse regions of the Western Hemisphere: the Northwest Coast of North America. A botanist by training and an anthropologist by nature, Turner has worked for many years in close collaboration with Indigenous First Nations teachers and colleagues to record their extensive practical uses and interactions with the plants and environments of their homelands. She masterfully employs a multi-disciplinary approach (ecological, paleoecological, archaeological, ethnographic, linguistic) to explore possible clues to the developmental history of this knowledge through time and across space. The results make this both a handbook for those curious about Indigenous plant utilization and environmental knowledge, and a sophisticated methodological treatise that provides a wealth of historically informative data.

Volume 1 includes an introductory chapter, two sections ('History', 'Development') with three chapters each, and three appendices. The purpose is clearly stated: to investigate 'people-plant interrelationships in northwestern North American in an effort to better understand the pathways and processes by which ethnobotanical and ethnoecological systems of Indigenous peoples . . . have developed, accumulated, spread, and evolved over time' (p. 1). It also fully covers background materials (tribal, language distributions), terminology, and difficulties in evaluating these data longitudinally. The first section reconstructs past distributions of people and plants in selected environments, considers pathways for early dispersals of people, the archaeological record, and what observations

by Indigenous peoples may have contributed to building their ancient knowledge of plant utilization. This is followed by the historical linguistic evidence in plant names (cognates, loans) for inferring plant knowledge transmission.

Selected examples help the reader understand the method and results, while tables and appendices provide the actual data. An additional chapter considers the difficulties of reconstructing plant traditions in the face of language loss, culture change, and new adaptations. Turner documents new plant introductions, changes in management, and overall environmental degradation through time to strengthen her arguments. The second section covers quantitative and qualitative data on plants used as food, in technology, and for healing – always with a focus on development, transmission, and diffusion of knowledge among the culturally and linguistically diverse groups. Again comparative tables bolster her arguments.

Volume 2 is the most innovative, especially when comparing Turner's work with older ethnobotanical volumes. Again there are two sections – 'Integration and management' and 'Underlying philosophy' – with multiple chapters. The first considers seasonal rounds of food gathering and how they illustrate and integrate deep knowledge (e.g. timings of harvests and use, continually monitoring seasonal conditions, etc.). Turner provides local and regional coverage, comparative data, and again considers time depths for traditions. This is followed by a discussion of the cultural institutions that organize knowledge systems (e.g. family, clan, alliances). Turner illustrates how larger ceremonial institutions and belief systems serve regulatory functions, reminding people of social and religious obligations to their worlds. The remaining chapters in the section focus on trade and exchange, management and sustainability practices and issues, and how these activities are transmitted and compare across geographic and cultural space.

The final section further illustrates the value of Turner's interdisciplinary approach. Here she masterfully focuses on the role of Indigenous narratives in promoting knowledge and ethics concerning plants and habitats. She then continues to examine how these and other areas of culture create and help maintain overall belief systems of ethnobotanical wisdom. Her final chapter provides a clear summary and conclusions concerning the depth of knowledge of plant worlds held by Indigenous Northwest Coast peoples, and its potential applications for

them and others, including contemporary land managers.

Turner's two volumes are, in my opinion, a true magnum opus, not only illustrating the strength of a multidisciplinary approach to ethnobiological data, but also through providing a new and more nuanced understanding of the natural and cultural worlds of Northwest Coast peoples. The author's botanical training and years of experience have allowed her to develop in-depth data of a very special kind. The narrative, which privileges Indigenous voices beautifully, illustrates the knowledge and principles that are its foci, and makes for very enjoyable reading. The ample illustrations provide a clear sense of the people, the region, and the work's context. Turner's control and use of the broader literature is amazing. The data compilations alone are of tremendous value, and, coupled with her approach and insights, should make this work stand for decades and beyond as a monumental work in ethnobiology, ethnoecology, and anthropology. I only wish that these topics were so treated in other world areas.

CATHERINE S. FOWLER *University of Nevada, Reno*

VAN DER VEER, PETER. *The value of comparison*. xii, 192 pp., bibliogr. Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 2016. £17.99 (paper)

In an early graduate anthropology class in the 1980s, I once said that anthropology involved comparing across cultures, shocking – even appalling – my classmates and the professor at my heresy. Having come from area studies, literature, and linguistics, I constantly drew comparisons, or, rather, they jumped out at me without invitation. However, the overall field of cultural (though not linguistic) anthropology has largely eschewed the method, dismissing both sloppy generalizations and the overall zeitgeist, which Peter van der Veer claims 'is deeply convinced of universality and generalizability and the ultimate genetic basis of all and everything' (p. 11). Cultural anthropologists have largely stuck with particularity, usually aiming to demonstrate how completely differently people behave, think, feel, or live. The debate rages on, but the questions remain interesting and worthwhile: how are people the same, and how are they different? And what does this mean?

So I am delighted with van der Veer's audacious, learned, new book, which explains exactly what comparison is and is not, how it should and should not be done, and then provides extensive examples from his own

research in and on India and China. His model requires deep, long-term involvement in several specific societies – knowing languages, histories, complexities – and gathering detailed precise information. Getting comparison just right requires a serious understanding of the enterprise and is not doing quick surveys, translated, across societies. Van der Veer dismisses the overhasty generalizers and the insistent particularizers, and therefore much of the work of cultural and, indeed, biocultural anthropology.

However, there are heroes who have done it well, and van der Veer situates himself in a line of thinkers from Mauss, Weber, Granet, Dumézil, Dumont, Geertz, Sahlins, Mintz, to Detienne (*Comparing the incomparable*, 2008). He issues challenges all around: not only to cognitive science (p. 5), but also to structuralist approaches, including the essentializing of recent ontologists such as Descola; to the use of 'coding' to locate apparently comparable terms in databases; or to the use of nation-level datasets, as in most social science research. Comparison at the broad abstract level – 'all languages have nouns' – is not illuminating, nor is comparison at the level of Whitehouse and Cohen's work comparing human cohesion as made visible in 'ritual' (pp. 3-4). So what works?

Van der Veer provides examples from topics he has spent his career investigating: a critique of rational choice theory through observation of how people look at money and the market (chap. 2); nationalism and its others (chap. 5); religion in the context of modernity, urbanism, iconoclasm, and erasure (chap. 4); and the particulars of caring for various non-kin, self-interest, poverty, and sanitation, especially in India, but also in communist countries like China (chap. 6). India and China provide fruitful settings in which to draw comparisons, given their similar sizes but differently detailed complexity.

One of van der Veer's timely cases is in chapter 3, detailing how Muslim minorities are treated. In India, tension with Muslims has given rise to violent Hindu nationalism; in China, it has led to exclusion; and in Europe, it has provoked debates about 'whether Muslims can be allowed to be part of civil society as Muslims' (p. 77). This exemplifies how the concept of 'civilizations' that may clash with one another does not hold up but, given the idea's prominence in public discourse, remains one with which we should contend. Thus van der Veer challenges the use of large-scale categories like the unified idea of 'a' civilization.

One of his fascinating examples of how to compare is in 'The afterlife of images' (chap. 4),

or the shared belief in icons as '*a representation of a virtual reality*' (p. 88, emphasis in original) even if destroyed. Van der Veer wonders about people's continued belief in 'religious power when secular power seems so overwhelming' (p. 88). In officially secular China, he observed people praying to images such as that of (Daoist) Master Yang, right near the state-rebuilt Buddhist temples, which tend to be ignored. Moreover, in both India and China astrology and numerology are increasingly popular.

In summation, this is a polemical book. I recommend forming discussion groups in

departments and graduate seminars to see what sticks and then to use it. As the author argues, if we are careful, 'the study of the fragment leads us to ask larger questions without coming to generalizations' (p. 19). This is our task, because '[a]nthropology is the only social science that reflects on Western ethnocentrism and takes the problem of translation seriously' (p. 20) and because comparison 'is always a double act of reflection' (p. 29).

Just because the work is hard, does not mean that it is not necessary.

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